

# **Bhagavad Gita**

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## *Table of Contents*

<i>Chapter 1.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Chapter 2.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Chapter 3.....</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Chapter 4.....</i>	<i>87</i>
<i>Chapter 5.....</i>	<i>122</i>
<i>Chapter 6.....</i>	<i>147</i>
<i>Chapter 7.....</i>	<i>181</i>
<i>Chapter 8.....</i>	<i>202</i>
<i>Chapter 9.....</i>	<i>227</i>
<i>Chapter 10 .....</i>	<i>249</i>
<i>Chapter 11 .....</i>	<i>264</i>
<i>Chapter 12 .....</i>	<i>278</i>
<i>Chapter 13 .....</i>	<i>298</i>
<i>Chapter 14 .....</i>	<i>339</i>
<i>Chapter 15 .....</i>	<i>359</i>
<i>Chapter 16 .....</i>	<i>380</i>
<i>Chapter 17 .....</i>	<i>412</i>
<i>Chapter 18 .....</i>	<i>434</i>



*asato ma sadgamaya,  
tamaso ma jyotirgamaya,  
mrtyor mamrtam gamaya.*

*Lead me to the truth from falsehood,  
Lead me to the light from darkness,  
Lead me to immortality from death.*

# **Chapter 1**

## **Arjuna Vishada Yoga**







## Part I

# The Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita is one of the most beloved scriptures of India. It is the holy book of the Hindus and was written thousands of years ago. Bhagavad Gita means "the song of the Lord" and is often referred to as Gita.

A 19th-century Sanskrit manuscript of the Bhagavad Gita



India is rich in culture and scriptures — the Vedas. The Vedas are vast religious texts and are the basis of Hindu traditions. The Vedas elaborate on chants, rituals, ceremonies, sacrifices, meditation, philosophy, and spiritual knowledge. Gita is the essence of all the four Vedas, so the entire knowledge of the cosmos is believed to be contained in Gita. The Bhagavad Gita consists of 700 verses and is arranged in 18 chapters.

The Gita celebrates the discovery of the Absolute — the essence of all manifestations, hidden from all because of maya — the cosmic delusion. The main aim of the Gita is to establish an unbreakable union with the Absolute.

## Mahabharata

Bhagavad Gita is a part of a bigger epic called Mahabharata. Mahabharata is a legendary epic narrative that includes the narration of the war called the battle of Kurukshetra, which was fought between the two branches of one royal family — the Pandavas and the Kauravas.

The dispute between the cousins began from a game of dice, which the Kauravas won by deceit. After winning the game, they forced the Pandavas into exile for thirteen years. After serving the exile, the Pandavas returned to claim their kingdom, which the Kauravas refused to return. The Pandavas decided to regain their kingdom, which eventually resulted in a war.

Mahabharata is the longest poem known. Its full version contains 100,000 *slokas* (couplets of verses) with about 1.8 million words. Mahabharata discusses various topics of Hinduism, beginning from the Hindu way of life to Hindu philosophy. It emphasizes the four goals of human life — the *Purusharthas* — righteous living, gaining prosperity, experiencing pleasure, and attaining liberation. The authorship of Mahabharata, along with Vedas and Puranas, which are some of the most important works of Hinduism are attributed to Vyasa.

## The Righteous war

The battle of Kurukshetra is referred to as the righteous war. According to ancient Indian scriptures — the Dharma shastras, wars out of greed were prohibited. War was looked at as a last resort under unavoidable circumstances. Even in an adverse situation like that of the Pandavas, the war was allowed only after the completion of the steps below:

1. **Make peace (*Sama*):** The first and foremost step is to avoid war by making peace through reasoning. If this fails, then the next step must be tried.
2. **Charity (*Dhana*):** Both armies must compromise on a settlement between them. For example, a portion of possession can be donated to avoid war. If this is not amicable, then the next step must be executed.
3. **Creating differences (*Bheda*):** It is suggested that the unrighteous side must be weakened by intimidating their army, thereby reducing their capabilities. If this also fails, only then should the final step be taken.
4. **Punishment (*Danda*):** If none of the above worked, one is allowed to use the weapons to establish justice.

According to the scriptures, the Pandavas attempted all avenues to avert the war, but as the Kauravas did not abide, the Pandavas resorted to fighting to restore justice.



## Part II

# Lord Krishna

Lord Krishna is one of the main deities in Hinduism. He is an avatar of God Vishnu and a friend of Arjuna (one of the Pandavas). He accompanies Arjuna to the war as his charioteer.

Lord Krishna is referred to as *Bhagavan*. *Bhagavan* can be translated as "God". Anyone who possesses the six characteristics— dominion, might, glory, splendour, wisdom, and dispassion is referred to as *Bhagavan*.

Although everyone possesses these qualities to a certain degree, only the one who has all these qualities in absolute is considered *Bhagavan*. Lord Krishna is *Bhagavan*, and He will be referred so.

*He who understands the creation and dissolution, the appearance and disappearance of beings, the wisdom and ignorance, should be called **Bhagavan**.*

- Vishnu Purana, 6.5.78





### Part III

## The Gita

Just before the commencement of the war, Arjuna is taken over by grief because he must fight against his extended family. Arjuna turns to his charioteer and friend *Bhagavan* Krishna for guidance as he is caught up in a moral dilemma.

At Arjuna's request, Lord Krishna discourses the cosmic knowledge detailing life, death, righteousness, duty, and goals to bring clarity to Arjuna.

The Bhagavad Gita is a compilation of Arjuna's questions and Lord Krishna's answers. It is written in the form of questions and answers. Arjuna, an ardent student, questions Lord Krishna about his life's existence and the purpose of his life, his conduct, duties, and dilemmas. Lord Krishna dispenses all his questions by imparting cosmic knowledge. Not only the Gita but many other scriptures like the Upanishads have also been written in the form of questions and answers because:

- It is easy to follow and differentiate the content and context discussed.
- It is easy to learn by asking against just reading. In ancient India, the knowledge of the scriptures was passed down from the teachers to the students verbally.
- It is easy to infer and build the characteristics and attitude of the student.
- It reveals the characteristics and attributes of the teacher.

### Gita's relevance in today's world

Gita is considered a life manual. Just like Arjuna, very often in our lives, we are confronted by situations that leave us in a dilemma, uncertain of what to do. We go through several internal battles in our lifetimes. The battle in Gita is comparable to the internal battles we encounter in the journey of our lives.

We do not always have the clarity of mind or the strength to face adverse situations to overcome them. Under such conditions, our mind gets clouded, and we do not know the difference between right and wrong.

The Gita imparts wisdom about the Self — who we truly are and helps us redefine our goals and pursue them. This knowledge helps us build endurance and perform the right actions. The goal of the Bhagavad Gita is to prepare us to construct our life path righteously and pursue perfection.

### Life is a mixture

Everyone's life is a mixture of both joy and sorrow. When in joy, we are carried away by it and do not prepare for sorrow. When in sorrow, we are unable to overcome it unprepared.

When the mind is taken over by pain, it is hard for the mind to relieve itself. Without a way out, we drown further into the abyss of hopelessness. The pain of the mind is called *shokam*. When one is physically sick, it is impossible to build health. Similarly, when in grief, it is impossible to build joy. Therefore, the mind must be healthy too, and only through practice can the mind get healthy.

Joy is our natural state of being. The mind, however, brings in sorrow. We are here to experience our spirits to the fullest, and we should. Succumbing to sorrow steals a part of our lives. Therefore, we should keep ourselves in a state of joy, and when we slip into sorrow, we should overcome it and get back to our natural state of being. The Bhagavad Gita is a guide to get us back on our path to perfection.

## Man and the other beings

**Intellect:** Although we share the same basic traits with animals, like eating, sleeping, and breeding, human beings have special capabilities that differentiate us from other animals. Only humans have intellect (*buddhi*). The other animals only have animal instincts that guide them and not the intellect. The intellect has three attributes to it:

1. **Self-awareness:** The main difference between humans and other animals is self-awareness. Animals do not have self-awareness. Most animals are self-unaware that they cannot even identify themselves in a mirror. This self-awareness is a blessing if we become fully aware of who we are. However, we do not know our true selves.
2. **Application of knowledge:** Humans can assimilate all available knowledge and put it to use. We have improved our living standards by many folds compared to other animals who live the same way they did centuries ago.
3. **Discrimination:** Because of intellect, humans can discriminate right from wrong and the real from the unreal.

### The advantages of the intellect

1. Humans rule the planet, not because of physical strength but because of intellect.
2. We can assimilate all available knowledge and put it to use. We learn from earlier generations and enhance everything to make life comfortable.
3. We can experience luxury and sophistication.
4. We create a society to live in with a better direction of right and wrong.

### The disadvantages of the intellect

The intellect can also bring one self-imposed grief and emotions such as fear. Animals also experience fear, but just enough to protect themselves. Animals do not brood over the future, think about old age and sickness and experience fear or anxiety. They also experience sickness and death, but they cannot contemplate these and worry before. For this reason, they do not experience sorrow or fear like us.

Animals also do not identify themselves and therefore do not compare themselves with other animals. Due to this lack of self-awareness, they do not experience emotions like envy, jealousy, greed, and others which we do.

Animals do not experience the pain of mind that humans do. The pain of the mind (*shokam*), which only the human experiences, is called *samsara*.

## *Samsara*

*Samsara* is one of the most fundamental eastern philosophical concepts. It is the central concept of many eastern religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, etc.

*Samsara* means aimless wandering. It is the cycle of death and rebirth. Everyone is born a *samsari* (a state of being in *samsara*) and experiences a spectrum of emotions like grief, joy, delusion, confusion, anger, jealousy, etc. All humans experience the pain of the mind called *shokam*, which is *samsara*.

*Samsara* manifests in humans as a lack of contentment in life. This lack causes sorrow.

### Liberation from *samsara*

The liberation from *samsara* is called *moksha*. To be liberated, one must break the cycle of birth and death. Liberation is attained with the right knowledge of the Self.

Everyone, however, is born ignorant of this knowledge. It takes effort, motivation, and practice to understand the true nature of the Self.

Only humans can attain liberation as only humans have the intellect. Human life is therefore considered a gift. After several thousands of incarnations, one attains a human birth, and with the human birth, one must aim to become one with the Supreme.



## Part IV

# The Essence of the Vedas

The Gita is the essence of the Vedas, and it is apparent that it touches upon various philosophical topics, but not many people know that the Gita also teaches the code of conduct.

*Dharma* is one of the central concepts of the Gita. There is no single-word translation for *dharmā* in western languages. *Dharma* can be loosely translated as one's duty and the code for proper conduct conforming to one's duty and nature. *Dharma* is also used to mean righteousness in some contexts. The essence of the Vedas can be broadly classified into two types of knowledge:

1. *Pravritti lakshana*
2. *Nivritti lakshana*

### *Pravritti lakshana*

*Pravritti* is the path of action. This path guides one on the do's and don'ts one must follow to live in accordance with *dharmā* (righteousness). *Pravritti lakshana* is further classified as:

1. *Samanya dharmā*
2. *Vishesha dharmā*

### *Samanya dharmā*

*Samanya dharmā* is referred to as the regular duties. It is easy to understand one's duties. The characteristics of *samanya dharmā* are:

- It applies to all human beings.
- It does not change with time.
- It does not change with the place.
- It does not change from person to person, with race, creed, gender, or age.

Some examples of *samanya dharmā* are speaking the truth, practicing non-violence, non-stealing, refraining from jealousy, being kind to all creatures, performing charity, practising forgiveness, etc. *Samanya dharmā* is treating others the way one likes to be treated.

### *Vishesha dharmā*

*Vishesha dharmā* is called the special *dharmā* and requires a proper understanding and so must be learned from a teacher. It is also applicable to all humans but changes from person to person based on certain factors. The characteristics of *vishesha dharmā* are:

- It varies from person to person.
- It varies from time to time.
- It varies from place to place.

*Vishesha dharmā* depends on the *varna-ashrama* of a person, which is the stage of a person's life and his chosen profession at that time. For example, the *vishesha dharmā* of a student is to learn, he cannot earn money at this period of his life, but when the student becomes a householder, his duties change. As a householder, he is supposed to earn and undertake the responsibility of his family. Similarly, a warrior's duties differ from that of a teacher. Though *samanya dharmā* prohibits killing, for a warrior (in a war), it is allowed by his *vishesha dharmā*.



### The Two Dharmas

Samanya dharma	Vishesha dharma
It applies to all human beings.	It applies to all human beings.
It does not change with time.	It varies from time to time.
It does not change with the place.	It varies from place to place.
It does not change from person to person, with race, creed, gender, age.	It varies from person to person.
	It take priority when in doubt.

### Which *dharma* should one follow?

As we can see from the above example, there are contradictions between the two *dharma*. According to the Vedas, *vishesha dharma* must take priority and be enforced when in doubt.

### The benefits of following *dharma* or the *pravritti lakshana*

1. **To obtain merits:** According to the Vedas, the bodily manifestation of us is not a coincidence. The body we are in, the parents we are born to, the situations we are born into is due to our merits (and/or) demerits accumulated from our earlier lives. Anything that is obtained without effort is considered to have come out of our merits. The merits are obtained by living according to *dharma*. Merits are invisible. One cannot see others or his own merits.
2. **To obtain the ability to discriminate (*Viveka*):** *Viveka* means discrimination. It is the ability to differentiate between the real and the unreal, the eternal and the temporary, the pleasure and the bliss. The merit we obtain by performing our duties gives us the wisdom to make the right choices in our lives, like choosing permanence over the transient.
3. **To achieve a transformation of character (*Purushartha-yogyata*):** Living righteously also equips us with the right qualification by making character modifications within us to achieve our chosen goal.

### *Nivritti lakshana*

*Nivritti* is the path of turning inward. It is the path for the ascetics, where the focus is on spiritual development, meditation, and contemplation. It is the path of knowledge.

### The benefits of following *nivritti lakshana*

*Nivritti lakshana* is the path of knowledge that helps us understand and contemplate cosmic knowledge, which leads to liberation.



## Part V

# The Structure of Gita

The 18 chapters of the Gita are divided into three sections.

### Chapters 1 – 6

The first section, chapters 1 to 6, is about the individual being. The Gita distinguishes between Soul and the non- soul. It details the characteristics of Soul - the *Atman*. These chapters emphasize that the real identity of an individual is the Soul (or Self) and differentiates It from everything else, which is non-soul.

Most individuals identify themselves with their body or their mind, which is non-soul. This is a mistake, and one understands this only through the knowledge of the Self. The knowledge of the Self is attained through learning the scriptures (the Upanishads).

To learn the scripture, however, one requires certain qualifications and capabilities.

In the first section of the Gita, Lord Krishna talks about ways by which one can attain qualifications and attain knowledge of the Self. There are detailed discussions on self-efforts, meditation, and control of mind and senses.

This section details *karma yoga* by which one attains purity of mind which is a prerequisite to attaining knowledge.

### Chapters 7 – 12

The second section, chapters 7 to 12, is about *Ishvara* (God). This section talks about the nature of God, His creation, manifestations, and His relationship with the created world.

In this section, Lord Krishna discusses devotion, various levels of devotions, and different types of devotees. He talks about the importance of devotion and shows how one progresses in devotion and through devotion. He emphasizes devotion as a path to liberation.

This section details *bhakti yoga*. *Bhakti* means devotion.

### Chapters 13 – 18

The third section, chapters 13 to 18, discusses the connection between an individual and God. Some of the most philosophical chapters are in this part.

This section details the three modes of nature (*gunas*) and how one must transcend them. In this section, Lord Krishna emphasizes the importance of developing good values. He details Absolute Consciousness and the means to establish a union with It.

This section is *jnana yoga*. *Jnana* means knowledge.



Chapter 1 - 6	Chapter 7 - 12	Chapter 13 - 18
Individual	God	Connection between an individual and God
Karma yoga	Bhakti yoga	Jnana yoga
Self effort	God's grace	Values and good qualities

### Conclusion

The Bhagavad Gita is not just a reservoir of cosmic knowledge but also a guide to help us reach and establish a union with Absolute Consciousness. The Gita teaches the laws on which our lives are based and details the conduct we must adopt to reach the higher pursuits of life.



## Part VI

# The War Within

In this chapter, we will analyze Arjuna's mind. The first few verses define the battlefield, the warriors, their positions, and the weapons. These are described through Sanjaya.

### Sanjaya

The blind king Dhritarashtra listens to Sanjaya



Sanjaya was Dhritarashtra's advisor and his charioteer. Dhritarashtra was the king of the Kuru Kingdom. His children came to be known as the Kauravas. He was born blind.

Sanjaya was a disciple of Vyasa, who granted him a divine vision by which he could see events that happened at a distance, right in front of his eyes. Through his divine vision, Sanjaya sees and narrates to Dhritarashtra the battle of Kurukshetra, which includes the Bhagavad Gita.

## Verses 1 – 47

Dhritarashtra said,

*O Sanjaya, having assembled on the holyfield of Kurukshetra intending to fight, what did my sons and the sons of Pandu do?* 1.1

The battlefield



Sanjaya said,

***Seeing the army of Pandavas arrayed for the battle, King Duryodhana approached his teacher Dronacharya and spoke thus. 1.2***

*Duryodhana was the eldest of the Kauravas, the hundred sons of blind king Dhritarashtra — the crown prince of Kuru Kingdom, along with his cousin Yudhishtira who was older than him.*



Duryodhana said,

***Dear teacher, behold the great army of the Pandavas, arrayed by your wise disciple, the son of Drupada. 1.3***

***Among these are great warriors like Yuyudhana, Virata, Drupada, and expert archers Bhima, Arjuna. There is also the accomplished fighter, the best among men like Dhrishtaketu, Chekitana, the mighty King of Kashi, Purujit, Kuntibhoja, and Shaibya. There are also the courageous Yudhamanyu, the valiant Uttamauja, the son of Subhadra, and the sons of Draupadi, who are all great chariot warriors. 1.4 - 1.6***

***O best of twice-born brahmins, also know the names of those on our side who are specially qualified to lead my military forces. I submit their names to you. 1.7***

***There is your respected self, Bhishma, Karna, Kripa, the ever - victorious in war Ashwatthama, Vikarna, and Bhurishrava. 1.8***

***And many other skilled heroes armed with various kinds of weapons, ready to lay down their lives for me. 1.9***

***Our army defended by Bhishma is unlimited, but the army of the Pandava protected by Bhima is limited. 1.10***

***Now I call upon you all — the Kaurava army to be positioned in your respective strategic points and support Bhishma alone. 1.11***

***Then the venerable grandsire Bhishma, roaring like a lion, blew his conch shell very loudly to encourage Duryodhana. 1.12***

*Blowing the conch shell is to signal the opposite army that they are ready for the war and can begin at once.*

***At once arose the combined sounds of the conches, kettle drums, bugles, trumpets, and cow horns which was tumultuous. 1.13***



***Then stationed in the magnificent chariot drawn by white horses, Krishna and Arjuna also blew their divine conches. 1.14***

***Krishna blew his conch called Panchajanya, Arjuna blew the Devadatta,***

*and Bhima, the doer of terrible deeds, blew the mighty conch called Paundra.* 1.15

*King Yudhishtira, the son of Kunti, blew the Anantavijaya, Nakula and Sahadeva blew the conch shells Sughosha and Manipushpaka, respectively.* 1.16

*The excellent archer, the king of Kasi, the great chariot-warrior — Sikhandi, Dhrshtadyumna, Virata, and the unconquerable Satyaki. King Drupada, the sons of Draupadi, the mighty-armed son of Subhadra, all blew their respective conches, O ruler of the earth.* 1.17, 1.18

*The uproar sound thundered across the sky and the earth, shattering the hearts of your sons, O Dhritarashtra.* 1.19

*O King, as the battle was about to commence, Arjuna, whose ensign was Lord Hanuman, raised his bow and spoke to Krishna thus.* 1.20



Arjuna said,

*O Krishna, please place my chariot in between both armies so that I may see the warriors with whom I must fight. I desire to see those who have come here to fight for the evil-minded son of Dhritarashtra.* 1.21 - 1.23



Sanjaya said,

*O Dhritarashtra, having thus been addressed by Arjuna, Krishna drew the magnificent chariot between the two armies in front of Bhishma and Drona and all the other kings of the world and said, Behold Arjuna, all the assembled members of the Kuru dynasty.* 1.24 - 1.25

*There, stationed in between both armies, Arjuna saw his uncles, fatherly elders, grandfathers, teachers, brothers, cousins, sons, nephews, grand-nephews, friends, fathers-in-law, and well-wishers.* 1.26

*Seeing all his kinsmen present there, Arjuna, overwhelmed with pity and grief, spoke thus.* 1.27



Arjuna said,

*O Krishna, seeing my kinsmen assembled for the battle here to fight, I feel weak in my limbs and my mouth feels parched.* 1.28

*I am shuddering and the hair on my body is standing on the end, my skin is burning, and my bow is slipping from my hands. 1.29*

*O Krishna, I am unable to maintain my composure, my mind is unsteady, and I see inauspicious omens. 1.30*

*I do not see any good in killing my kinsmen in the battle. I do not desire victory or the kingdom, O Krishna. 1.31*

*Of what value are kingdoms, pleasure, or life itself when the very people for whose sake we covet them remain poised here for battle, ready to give up their kingdom and lives? 1.32 - 1.33*

*Teachers, fathers, sons, grandfathers, uncles, grandsons, fathers-in-law, grand-nephews, brothers-in-law, and other kinsmen are present here. 1.34*

*O Krishna, even if they were to kill me, I do not wish to slay them even if we were to gain sovereignty over the three worlds, leave alone slaying them for the sake of the earth. 1.35*

*By killing the sons of Dhritarashtra, what pleasures will we derive? We will only incur sin by killing our teachers and guardians though they may be aggressors. We should, therefore, not slay the sons of Dhritarashtra, for how can we be happy killing our kinsmen? 1.36 - 1.37*

*O Krishna, even if their intellect is eclipsed by greed and they see no sin in ruining the family or hostility towards friends, should we not refrain from such sin as we clearly see the evil in destroying the family? 1.38 - 1.39*

*With the decline of the dynasty, its spiritual traditions get vanquished. When traditional values perish, unrighteousness dominates the entire society. 1.40*

*With the preponderance of unrighteousness, the women of the family become degraded and from degraded women, the undesired progeny is born. 1.41*

*The undesirable progeny forces both the family and the destroyers of the family into a hellish life. Their ancestors also fall due to deprivation of the sacrificial offerings. 1.42*

*Through the heinous acts of the destroyers of the dynasty giving rise to unwanted progeny, the culture of a civilized society is ruined. 1.43*

*O Krishna, I have heard that those who destroy the family and religious traditions dwell in hell for eternity. 1.44*

*Alas, what a pity, we intend to kill our own kinsmen for the pleasures of the kingdom. Driven by greed, we have resolved to perform a great sin. It would indeed be better if the sons of Dhritarashtra, armed with weapons, kill me unarmed and unresisting on the battlefield. 1.45 - 1.46*



*Having spoken thus, Arjuna cast aside his bow and arrows and sat down on the seat of his chariot, overwhelmed with grief.* 1.47





## Part VII

# Arjuna's Despondency

Arjuna, who is taken over by grief, is reasoning with Lord Krishna about why they should not fight and how it affects the culture and, finally, the kingdom itself, and that there is no point in winning a kingdom that will ruin itself due to the war.

It is apparent that Arjuna is taken over by grief, but what is not apparent is that he is also taken over by delusion. He thinks that the righteous war should not be waged. We can see that there is a flaw in the decision-making ability of Arjuna. That which is his duty looks sinful to him.

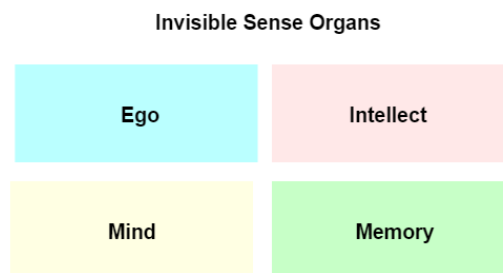
The grief and the impairment of his decision-making ability are due to his attachment. He is attached to his extended family and this attachment is the root cause of his grief and delusion.

### Attachment (*Raaga*)

Attachment builds on something or someone with constant contact with that object or the person in mind or matter. Attachment affects our internal (invisible) sense organs (*antha-karana*).

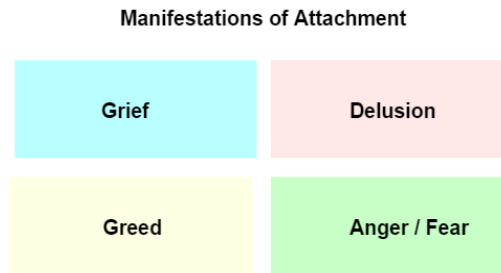
### Invisible sense organs (*Anthakarana*)

*Antar* means within, and *karana* means sense organs. *Anthakarana* means internal organs or invisible organs. According to Vedanta, our invisible organs consist of four parts:



1. **Ego (*Ahamkara*):** Ego is what identifies oneself with the body as "I".
2. **Intellect (*Buddhi*):** The decision-making part of the internal sense organ.
3. **Mind (*Manas*):** The emotional form of the internal sense organ, it deals with different kinds of emotions such as love, hate, suspicion, fear, etc.
4. **Memory (*Chitta*):** The region where impressions, memories, and experiences are stored.

Attachment manifests itself in many ways. It manifests as an excessive passion for things which results in various emotions like grief (*shokam*), delusion (*moha*), greed (*lobha*), anger (*krodha*), fear (*bhaya*), etc.



- **Grief (*Shokam*)**: When the object of our desire is either perishable or is already perished, we experience grief. We experience this as pain in our minds.
- **Delusion (*Moha*)**: When grief affects the intellect, it causes delusion.
- **Greed (*Lobha*)**: When we experience the object of our desire, we desire to experience more of it. This is greed.
- **Anger (*Krodha*)/Fear (*Bhaya*)**: When there is a barrier between the object of our desire and us, we experience either anger or fear.

#### **What happens to one in delusion?**

The inherent nature of one's intellect is to differentiate between right and wrong. The intellect itself will not mix the two up.

For anyone to pursue something, both the mind and the intellect must agree. When there is a conflict of interest, it will not be possible for one to pursue anything for long.

The mind that is taken over by desire will convince the intellect to make the same choice as the mind, which the intellect eventually submits to. The intellect then makes decisions to suit the desire instead of what is right. The intellect loses its inherent discrimination power because of attachment. This is called delusion (*moha*).

When one's duty looks sinful, then the intellect is in a state of delusion under the influence of the mind, which is taken over by attachment. When the intellect is caught up in delusion, it deceives itself without realizing it.

Arjuna is taken over by grief. The grief manifests as trembling and other physical ailments for him. He is also taken over by delusion. The delusion manifests as wrong decisions. His intellect no longer agrees with the war due to his attachment to his extended family.



This is a righteous war as the Pandavas are fighting for their rights and not out of greed. Lord Krishna removes Arjuna's delusion with knowledge and prepares him for the war. The discourse between Lord Krishna and Arjuna is Gita.

Gita removes ignorance by imparting the knowledge of the Self to the one who understands it.

The next chapter is the chapter of knowledge, where Lord Krishna briefs about life, death, body, Soul, and duty. The essence of the Gita begins in the next chapter, and the next chapter is also the index of the following sixteen chapters.



**Aum Tat Sat**



# Sankhya Yoga

## Chapter 2



The second chapter is considered the index chapter of the Gita as it outlines the concepts that are elaborated in the later chapters. Arjuna, who has mastered the skills of his profession, faces a war he is not convinced to fight. He is filled with questions about the nature of life, death, the afterlife, duty, and sin. He surrenders to Lord Krishna and pleads for his guidance. Lord Krishna guides him to Cosmic knowledge. The philosophy of the Gita begins in this chapter.



## Part I

# Plea for Guidance

*Some **jivas** (individuals imbued with life forces) enter the womb to be embodied as beings and others go into immovable according to their **karma** and knowledge.*

**-Kathopanishad (2.2.7)**

**Samsara** is the most fundamental and one of the central concepts of Hinduism and many other eastern religions. **Samsara** means wandering through. It is a repetitive cycle of death and rebirth. It is the process of reincarnating to experience **karma**. Suffering is an inevitable part of **samsara**, and so is ageing, disease and death, an inevitable experience of the incarnates. Only by breaking the cycle of death and rebirth can one be freed from **samsara**. **Moksha** is liberation from **samsara**.

*The unwise dwell in the dark, regarding themselves as wise and learned, they go round and round deluded in many crooked ways, like the blind led by the blind.*

**-Kathopanishad (1.2.5)**

### **Samsara (Aimless wandering)**

**Samsara** means aimless wandering; it is the cycle of death and rebirth. Everyone is born a **samsari** and experiences a spectrum of emotions like grief, joy, delusion, confusion, anger, jealousy, etc. All humans experience the pain of the mind called **shokam**, which is **samsara**. **Samsara** manifests in humans as a lack of contentment in life. This lack causes sorrow.

#### **Everyone experiences sorrow**

1. All humans experience sorrow. The reason for sorrow varies from person to person. Some may be grieving the death of a loved one. Some others may lament their poor health, and others the absence of wealth.
2. The time duration of every individual's sorrow is different, but suffering is inevitable.
3. As one ages, the cause of sorrow changes, but the sorrow does not cease.

#### **How can one be freed from sorrow?**

Even if one identifies the reason for his sorrow and eliminates it, there will soon be another reason that will bring him sorrow.

Sorrow is a component of **samsara** and suffering is inevitable. Only by breaking the cycle of birth and death (**samsara**) can one be freed from **shokam** (sorrow). Liberation from **samsara** is called **moksha** and is considered the ultimate human goal.

Every human can attain liberation. Human life is considered rare and is extremely important, as, with each birth, there is a possibility for liberation. Liberation

is attained with the right knowledge of the Self. Everyone, however, is born ignorant of this knowledge. It takes effort, motivation, and practice to understand the true nature of the Self. Liberation, therefore, does not just happen because of human birth but must be attained through penance.

### **The qualities required to attain liberation**

It is said, when the student is ready, the teacher appears. And to be ready, certain qualities are prerequisites for the student. The four qualities mentioned below are mandatory for anyone seeking liberation:

1. Identify that one is a *samsari*.
2. Desire for liberation.
3. Recognizing one's intellect alone is not sufficient to get him out of *samsara*.
4. Surrendering to the teacher (*guru*).

**Identify that one is a *samsari*:** One does not always attain wisdom because of ageing or his experience. One can experience something without acquiring the wisdom around it. Similarly, one might be experiencing *samsara* even without recognizing it. Sorrow in our lives helps us identify *samsara*. A situation without sorrow will not help identify *samsara*. Identifying that one is a *samsari* is, therefore, the first step.

### **The story of Buddha**

Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama) was born into a ruling class family. Soon after his birth, his family was informed by a hermit that he would become a sage. His father did not want this to happen, so he hid all forms of sorrow and ensured Siddhartha was engulfed in all kinds of worldly pleasures. Despite his father's best efforts, when Siddhartha left his palace to meet his subjects, he witnessed an old man, a sick man, and a decaying corpse. Witnessing the inevitable fate of all incarnates, he plunged into grief. He later saw an ascetic and wanted to follow his path. He renounced everything and went on with the sole mission of finding the true nature of the Self. After several years of hardship and penance, he was liberated.

The grief helped him identify *samsara*. No amount of worldly pleasure can hide the transient nature of the world and keep one content.

**Desire for liberation:** Some people know they are *samsaris* but are not motivated to seek liberation. One should have a burning desire to be liberated. Otherwise, no path will lead him to liberation.

**Recognizing one's intellect alone is not sufficient to get him out of *samsara*:** Recognizing that until now, his intellect did not get him out of *samsara* and therefore will not ever is the third step. This can be described as an overwhelming feeling of helplessness and the desire for guidance.

**Surrender to the teacher (*guru*):** After all the three above, one must surrender to a spiritual teacher to be guided.

### **The bleating lion cub**

A shepherd once found a lost lion cub and decided to bring him up along with his sheep. The cub became a member of the flock. He grazed the field and bleated like the others. One day a big old lion saw the bleating cub and took him to the river-side. In the reflection, he showed the cub how they both looked similar and told the cub he was a lion. The cub at once realised who he was and roared. Similarly, when the intellect is deluded by illusion, the intellect alone is insufficient to attain liberation. Only a *guru* can show our real Self to us.



Though it is said that the Bhagavad Gita is for everyone, we should not enforce it on

anyone. It must be given only when asked for because:

- We don't know if one desires knowledge.
- We don't know if one is qualified to understand it.

## Verses I – 5

On the battlefield, just before the commencement of the war, Arjuna witnessing his opponents, who are his relatives, is taken over by grief and refuses to fight. Sanjaya said,

*The Supreme Lord spoke to Arjuna, whose eyes were full of tears, being overwhelmed with pity and sorrow. 2.1*

Lord Krishna said,

*Hey Arjuna, at this critical moment, where did all this exhaustion come from? Why do you sound so unmanly? 2.2*

*This attitude does not benefit a warrior. This will not lead you to heaven but bring you infamy. Give up the cowardice and this petty weakness and arise for the battle! 2.3*

Although we know that Lord Krishna is the teacher and Arjuna is the student, He is not guiding Arjuna yet but is just talking to him as a friend. This is because Arjuna has not asked for His guidance.

Arjuna is grieving and has recognized that he is a *samsari*. He desires to be freed. However, he has not realised that his intellect alone is insufficient and has not surrendered to Lord Krishna.

Arjuna, who initially said he did not want to fight as it was a sin, realises his attachment to his extended family as the real reason. Arjuna said,

*How can I counter-attack my teachers (Bhisma and Drona – the Kauravas), who are worthy of my worship? How will I strike them with the arrows? 2.4*

*It is better to live a life by begging without taking their lives, for they are noble elders and teachers. By killing them we will remain in this world only to enjoy the wealth and possessions tainted by their blood. 2.5*

### *Sannyasi*

*Sannyasi* denotes a person who has renounced all his possessions and materialistic goals to dedicate his life to spiritual pursuits. *Sannyasis* beg to keep their bodies alive to pursue their goal. They should not be mistaken for a beggar.

**Difference between a beggar and a *sannyasi***

- A *sannyasi* does not beg because he has nothing. He has renounced what he had.
- A beggar does not have a goal, but a *sannyasi's* central goal is liberation.
- A *sannyasi* is satisfied with what he gets or even if he doesn't get anything. A beggar is not satisfied. He craves more.

**Why do the *sannyasis* beg?**

Begging is the only means for the renunciants to keep their bodies alive to continue their spiritual journey. Begging is also the best way to overcome ego, pride, vanity, and attachment and cultivate detachment, dispassion, endurance, and tolerance. It is

the duty of others to serve the renunciants only food and water with the utmost respect.

Arjuna, a valorous warrior, is confident of winning his kingdom back. However, due to the attachment to his extended family, he wishes to renounce and endure *sannyasa*.

## Verses 6 – 9

Arjuna said,

*I do not understand which is better, victory or defeat, if we should conquer them or they should conquer us. The very sons of Kauravas after slaying whom we do not even wish to live. 2.6*

*I am stricken with weakness and pity and my mind bewildered. What is my real duty? Tell me for certain what is the best course of action for me. I am your disciple. Instruct me who has taken refuge in You. 2.7*

*Even if we gain the undisputed and affluent kingdom on this earth and sovereignty over the heavens, I do not see any means to dispel my grief. 2.8*

Sanjaya said,

*Having spoken thus, Arjuna said to Lord Krishna, I will not fight and became silent. 2.9*

Arjuna having realised his helplessness and incapability to face the crisis presented before him, surrenders to Lord Krishna. A spiritual student should also have certain qualifications to be accepted by the teacher.

### **The qualifications required to receive the teachings**

Apart from qualities, certain qualifications are required to receive the teachings. These qualifications are built over time with discretion and practice. All the below mentioned qualifications are required to receive the knowledge of the Self:

1. Discrimination (*Viveka*)
2. Renunciation (*Vairagya*)
3. The six-fold path (*Shad-Sampat*)
4. Strong desire to attain liberation (*Mumukshutva*)

**Discrimination:** The ability to discriminate the permanent from the transient is called *viveka*. It is the prime qualification which is the foundation for the other three.

One who understands everything in the world and that the world itself is perishable is wise. It is *maya* (illusion) that hides the transience of the world and keeps us all attached to it. The deluded is unaware of the Soul and Its realisation.

**Renunciation:** Renunciation of all attachments and temporary pleasure to pursue the spiritual goal of liberation is called *vairagya*. Though we may know the nature of the transient world, we are still caught up in worldly pleasures, unable to detach from its temptations. Renunciation comes with discrimination; however, discrimination alone does not bring detachment. Dispassion must be developed with practice.

**The six-fold path:** The spiritual path is full of hardship. To keep going steady on this path, one must have self-control and discipline. The six-fold path helps one endure the spiritual path. The six-fold path consists of:

1. *Sama* — control of the mind.
2. *Dama* — control of the external sense organs.
3. *Uparati* — to refrain from certain (forbidden) actions.
4. *Titiksha* — to practice tolerance.

5. *Sraddha* — to maintain faith in the teacher.
6. *Samadhana* — to focus the mind on the chosen goal.

**The strong desire to attain liberation:** To reach the goal, the aspirants must let go of all worldly sensual pleasures so that liberation becomes their only desire.

The strong desire to attain liberation comes naturally to the one who has crossed the previous three stages. Once a seeker has all these four qualities, he qualifies to hear the truth of the scriptures.

The Qualities Required for Liberation	The Qualifications Required for a Student
Identify one is a samsari	Discrimination
Desire for liberation	Renunciation
Recognize that one's intellect alone is not enough	The six-fold path
Surrender to a guru	Desire for liberation

Arjuna, who is qualified and has the qualities to attain the Supreme knowledge, will receive the teaching. *Bhagavan* Krishna becomes the teacher. The knowledge of the Self is called *Atma jnana* (Self-realisation), and the person who beholds it is called *Atma jnani* (Self-realised). The spiritual essence of the Bhagavad Gita begins now.

## Verse 10 – 11

Sanjaya said,

*O Dhritarashtra, then in the midst of the two armies Lord Krishna, spoke these words to the grief-stricken Arjuna with a smile. 2.10*

Lord Krishna said,

*Hey Arjuna, you are lamenting for that which is not worthy of grief, but you speak as though you are wise. The learned does not lament for the living or the dead. 2.11*

Lord Krishna explains the nature of grief, our association with it and the transient nature of our bodies to Arjuna.

### Grief

Arjuna is worried about the death of his kin in the war and grieves about it. Just like Arjuna, the death of a dear one is the reason for many others' grief.

Grief, however, is not an inherent nature of death. The inherent nature of something should always remain the same, irrespective of the situation. For example, fire is always hot anywhere; therefore, heat is its inherent nature.

There are several deaths every day, but we do not lament them all. Death itself is not the reason for grief but our association with it.

### The I and Mine

- I am (*Ahamkara*)
- Mine (*Mamakara*)

Anything we associate with "I" and "mine" brings grief. Our relationship with the situation or people is the reason for grief. To remove our sorrow, we do not have to change the situation but remove our association from it, remove the "I and mine" from it. The reason for grief is not the situation but the ignorance about our true Self. The knowledge of the Self eliminates all sorrow. It is said, the learned does not lament. The Gita does not eliminate our undesired situations. It imparts the wisdom of our true Self, which removes all sorrow.

### Who is this "I"?

Generally, everyone associates oneself with the mind and the body. This is ignorance, and all beings are born with it. Ignorance can only be removed with knowledge. According to Gita, you are neither the body nor the mind. You are the Soul that witnesses them both.

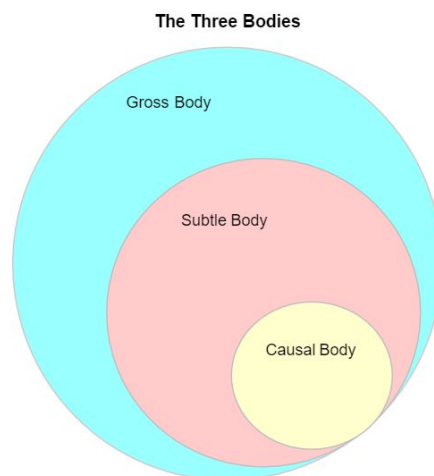
**The Mind:** The mind is that which looks at one's body and says, *I am someone with this body*.

**The Body:** The body is referred to as *jada* in the scriptures. *Jada* means lifeless, unintelligent, and dumb. When we remove the awareness from the body, it becomes lifeless. The body is called *anitya* which means temporary and perishable. The body is also called *anatma*, which means non-soul.

### Our three bodies

According to the scriptures all of us have three bodies. They are:

1. The gross body (*Sthula sharira*)
2. The subtle body (*Sukshma sharira*)
3. The causal body (*Karana sharira*)



### The gross body

The body visible to oneself and others is called the gross body. It is made up of the five primordial elements (*panchamaha bhootas*), which are:

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. Space | 4. Water |
| 2. Air   | 5. Earth |
| 3. Fire  |          |

### The characteristics of the gross body

The four main characteristics of the gross body are:

1. The gross body is subject to the sixfold changes:

1. Existence (in the womb)	4. Change
2. Birth	5. Decay
3. Growth	6. Death
2. It is visible to oneself and others.



3. It is nurtured by food and kept alive by it.
4. After death, the physical body perishes and dissolves back into its five primordial elements.

### **The subtle body**

The subtle body is considered to contain all vital functions that keep the gross body alive. The subtle body consists of:

1. Perception
2. Response
3. Life force
4. Mind
5. Intellect

**Perception:** The five organs of perception are:

1. Eyes
2. Ears
3. Nose
4. Tongue
5. Skin

These five organs are present physically in our gross body; however, the subtle body is the instrument of perception. The perception is due to the mind behind the sense organ.

**Response:** The five organs of action are:

1. Speech
2. Hands
3. Legs
4. Anus
5. Genitals

The organs of action are by which we respond to the world. Their activities are controlled by the subtle body.

**Lifeforce:** The five instruments of lifeforce are:

1. Respiration
2. Elimination of waste from the body.
3. Blood (nutrients) circulation.
4. Digestion.
5. Reversing system like sneezing, crying, vomiting, etc. (This ejects the subtle body from the gross body at the time of death.)

The lifeforce is responsible for the vitality of the body, which is controlled by the subtle body.

**Mind:** The mind deals with emotional functions. It deals with different kinds of emotions such as love, hate, suspicion, fear, etc.

**Intellect:** Intellect is the decision-making part of the subtle body.

### **The characteristics of the subtle body**

1. The subtle body is also subject to change.; its instruments can weaken or enhance. E.g., eyesight and memory can improve or fail.
2. The subtle body is only evident to oneself. Others do not know or experience our thoughts or feelings.
3. The subtle body does not die with the gross body. It takes up the memory and moves from one body to another after death.

### **The causal body**

The causal body is the reason (the seed) for the subtle and the gross body to exist. It has no other function other than being the seed. Our merits and demerits stay in the causal body. We earn our bodies (both the gross and the subtle) based on our merits. The body and the mind we are in is due to the consequences of our deeds from all our previous births.

### **The characteristics of the causal body**

1. The causal body was never created but always present.
2. The causal body is the reason for the subtle and the gross body to exist.
3. The causal body is not visible to oneself and others.
4. Even when the entire universe is destroyed, the causal body will not be



destroyed. The beings exist in the unmanifest state in their causal body during the destruction and will be manifested again when the universe is recreated.

**The Characteristics of the Bodies**

Gross Body	Subtle Body	Causal Body
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Subject to six-fold change: Existence, birth, growth, change, decay, death.</li> <li>2. Visible to oneself, and others.</li> <li>3. Nurtured by food.</li> <li>4. Perishes at death.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Subject to change: Instruments of the subtle body can weaken or enhance.</li> <li>2. Visible to oneself, not others.</li> <li>3. Does not die with the gross body.</li> <li>4. Takes up another body after death.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Never created but always present.</li> <li>2. Reason for the subtle and the gross body.</li> <li>3. Not visible to oneself, or others.</li> <li>4. Not destroyed even when the entire universe is destroyed.</li> </ol>



## Part II

# The Eternal

### *Atman* (Soul)

The *Atma* (Soul) is the essence of all living beings. The Soul is pure consciousness. The Soul is called *nitya*, which means eternal.

### Reflection of the Soul (*Chidabhasa*)



Our body, which is otherwise lifeless, is illuminated by the Soul. The Soul, whose subtle form is pure consciousness, is reflected in our intellect. This reflection illuminates the gross and the subtle body.

The reflection of the Soul in our intellect is called *chidabhasa*. *Chit* means true awareness, *abhasa* means reflection. *Chidabhasa* can be compared to the sun's reflection in a mirror:

- Even though the mirror is illuminated by the sun, the sun is not inside the mirror.
- If the reflection of the sun is disturbed, the mirror is no longer illuminated, and the illumination is lost even though

the sun is still present.

- Destroying the mirror does not destroy the sun.

The Soul's reflection is the same. When the reflection is lost, the body is destroyed, but losing the body does not destroy the Soul.

### What happens to the body during death?

During death, the subtle body, along with the reflection of the Soul, leaves the gross body. The subtle body, which has the imprints of our memories, takes this knowledge and leaves the body. When the reflection of the Soul is lost, the body becomes lifeless, and the gross body goes back to its five primordial elements (space, air, earth, fire, and water).

### What happens to the Soul during death?

Nothing. The Soul, like the sun, is always present and is completely unperturbed. The unchanging Soul is referred to as *nirvikaram*, meaning unaltered.

## Verses 12 – 14

Lord Krishna said,

*I have never not existed. Neither have you never not existed. These kings have never not existed, nor is it that we shall ever cease to exist.* 2.12

*Just as in this body the embodied Self passes into childhood, youth and old age, so does it pass into another body; the wise are not deluded.* 2.13

Lord Krishna tries to eliminate Arjuna's grief by educating him about the permanence of the Soul. However, Lord Krishna wants to make sure that Arjuna does not grieve

over the destruction of their bodies, and so He said,

*When the body establishes a relationship with the external world (via the senses), it experiences heat and cold, pleasure and pain. But these effects have a beginning and an end; they are transient; endure them bravely. 2.14*

Lord Krishna teaches Arjuna to embrace the inevitable changes.

**Acceptance:** Accept that which is inevitable. The change itself is not the cause of sorrow, but the non-acceptance of it is. Resistance is *samsara*. Do not resist what you cannot change. Regardless of what we do, certain things are bound to happen. The occurrence of these cannot be stopped under any circumstances. We must accept them even when they are undesired.

**Why should one accept these?**

One must accept them because there is no other option. The inevitable cannot be restrained. The best one can do under such circumstances is to tolerate it without resistance.

Any situation that brings us sorrow will not stay, and any situation that brings us joy also will not stay. Those who understand this fear nothing.

## Verse 15

Lord Krishna said,

*The wise, who treats both pain and pleasure in the same way, will alone attain immortality. 2.15*

Having taught Arjuna about the transience of the body and to accept the inevitable, Lord Krishna explains a very important concept, the truth and the delusion that hides it.

**The truth, false and the delusion - *Sat, Asat, Mithya***

*Sat* means the truth. That which exists. *Asat* is the opposite of *sat*, which means untrue, delusion. That which does not exist.

### The Snake and the Rope

A man walks in the night. He sees a snake on his way. To avoid it, he takes another path. He returns along the same path the next morning, and he finds a rope in the place of the snake. He realises that in the dark, he mistook the rope for a snake. Now that he has realised this, he will never mistake that rope for a snake again. The snake that once existed in his reality has disappeared from it because of the knowledge. The rope is the truth that has always existed. The snake never existed except it did in his reality alone and ceased to exist after his realisation. The snake is neither *sat* nor *asat*. It is *mithya*

### *Mithya*

*Mithya* can be defined as delusion. It is that which exists in one's experience alone. It is not real but is also not unreal. When one experiences it, it seems real. It is because of our ignorance we think that everything we experience exists and that which we don't, doesn't exist. According to the Vedas, the world is *mithya*, an ever-changing illusion.

**How can one differentiate between *sat, asat* and *mithya*?**

*Sat* is

1. That which exists in all the three divisions of time, the past, the present, and the future.
2. That which exists independently.

*Asat, mithya* is

1. That which exists in the present only.
2. That which cannot exist independently. For example, a shadow which depends on a source object is not real.
3. *Mithya* can be removed by knowledge.

As *mithya* is present in the present, it is hard to regard it as unreal. That is the reason we are unable to see the transient nature of the world which is a delusion.

*When the snake exists, the rope doesn't.*

Truth (Sat)	Delusion (Mitya, Asat)
1. That which exists in all the three divisions of time, the past, the present, and the future.	1. That which exists only in the present.
2. That which exists independently.	2. That which cannot exist independently.

### ***Brahman***

*Brahman* is the Cosmic Soul — the Absolute Reality. According to the Upanishads (Hindu philosophical scriptures), *Brahman* is defined as the omnipresent, eternal spiritual source of the universe. It is the source of all that exists and is present in all that exists. Vedas dictates that the *Brahman* is the unchanging Absolute Reality.

### ***Brahma satya jagat mithya***

*Brahman* is real. *Jagat* (the world) is a delusion. The world is an empirical reality, not Absolute. This is the fundamental concept of the Vedas. The world is experienced and therefore seems real, the Absolute Reality (*Brahman*) is not experienced, and so It seems unreal.

It is hard to comprehend *Brahma satya jagat mithya* as it sounds contradictory. This is because we use our experience to determine the real and the unreal. The real and unreal should be determined from one's wisdom and not from one's worldly experiences.

***The hereafter does not reveal itself to a person devoid of discrimination, negligent and perplexed by the delusion of wealth. He thinks, "This world alone exists and none other," thus he falls again and again under my sway.***

**- Kathopanishad (1.2.6)**

## **Verse 16**

Lord Krishna said,

***That which is nonexistent does not have an existence. That which is existent does not, not exist. The nature of both has been known by the learned.*** 2.16

This verse is one of the most important verses of the Bhagavad Gita and the essence of the Vedanta itself.

*Bhagavan* Krishna describes the eternal to impart the knowledge which discriminates the truth from delusion.



### **The Soul is real**

The three states of consciousness (*avastha traya vivekam*) reveal the eternal nature of the Soul. The Upanishads recognize three states of consciousness as:

1. The awake state. (*Jagrat*)
2. The dream state (during sleep). (*Swapna*)
3. The deep sleep state. (*Sushupti*)

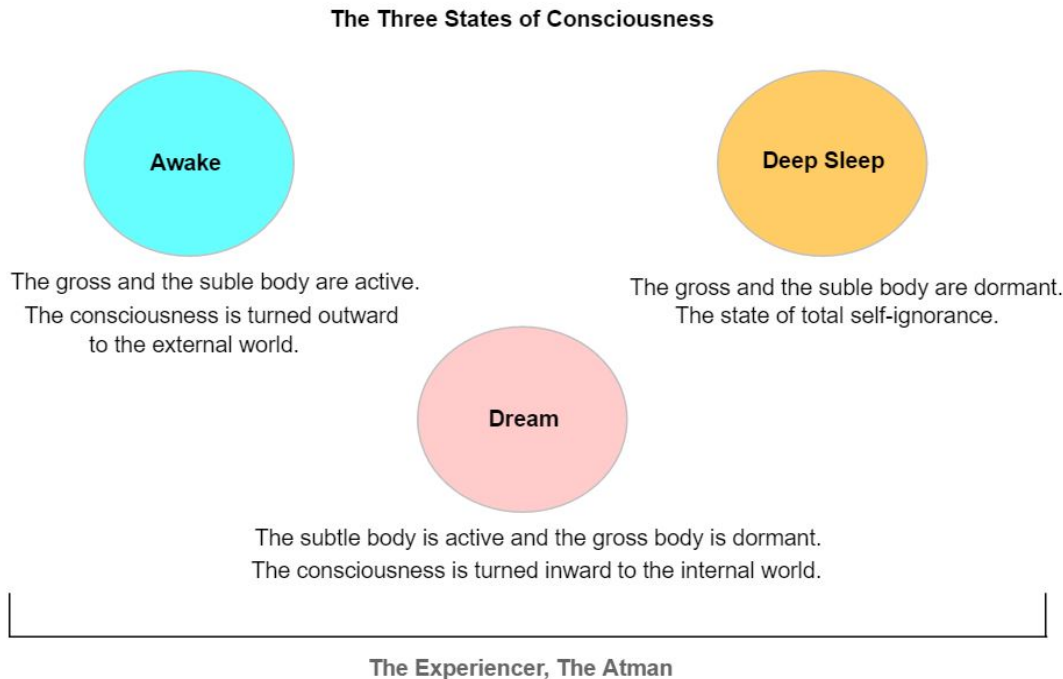
**The awake state:** When one is awake, both the body and the mind are active, one can say he has both the gross and the subtle body. In this state, the consciousness is turned outward to the external world. One experiences the world which is external to his body and mind. This world is available to others as well. The waking state is experienced by the five senses and is a two-way transaction where one experiences and responds. In this state, the "I" exists.

**The dream state:** In the dream state, the dreamer exists, but his gross body is left behind. The mind is active, but the body is left without any experience. It is in a state of lifelessness. In the dream state, one's consciousness is turned inwards, and he experiences a world that is internal and constructed out of his memories and tastes. This world is only available to oneself. In the dream state, even without the body, the "I" exists.

**The deep sleep state:** In the deep sleep state, both the mind and the body are not active; both lie dormant. In this state, there is no external or internal world. This is a state of total self-ignorance. In this deep sleep state, even without the body or the mind, the "I" exists.

### **The Experienter**

In all three states, there is always a consciousness that is ever-present as a witness and experiences these states. This consciousness is *Atman* — the experienter. The Soul is the unchanging truth that always exists.



**The Soul is Independent:** The "I" consciousness does not require any of the bodies. It can exist in a deep state of sleep without the company of both the mind and the body. The Soul is independent.

**The Soul is Unchanging:** We have seen the body is subject to six-fold changes: existence, birth, growth, change, decay, and death. When the body changes, the witness of the body (the Soul) does not change.

**The Soul is Omnipresent:** The Soul does not have a form. And It is prevalent in all three divisions of time (the present, the past and the future). It is omnipresent.

**The Soul is Imperishable:** The Soul that does not have a form cannot break, perish or erode. Neither does it have attachments which can weaken It. The Soul is imperishable.

**The Soul is Indestructible:** The body, which is made by the five elements (space, air, fire, water, earth), is protected and destroyed by them. The Soul is not made of these five elements and cannot be disturbed by them.

**The Soul is Eternal:** The Soul is referred to as *kutastha nitya*, which means absolute permanence. This means the Soul is not destroyed even when the entire universe is destroyed.

*Pralaya:* *Pralaya* is the dissolution of the entire universe. The Soul is not destroyed during the dissolution of the universe and exists even when the universe itself does not. The Soul is Absolute Eternal.

**The Soul is Immeasurable:** The Soul that is formless cannot be felt by the body or its senses. It is immeasurable.

**The Soul is a Non-Doer and a Non-Experienter:** *Karma* means action. *Karta* means the one who performs the action. *Bhokta* is the one who experiences the results of the action (the reaper). The subtle body in which the Soul's pure intelligence is reflected (*chidabhasa*) is the doer (*karta*). The ego in the subtle body identifies itself as the doer, as the *karta*. The Soul is neither a doer nor a reaper. The Soul is only the witness. Any action performed invariably results in consequences for the doer. The Soul, which does not perform the action, does not experience its consequences also.

### ***Karma phala***

*Karma* means action, and *phala* means fruit. *Karma phala* means the fruits

or consequences of one's actions.

The ***karma phala*** consists of

- ***Sanchita karma*** -the sum total of all actions done by one during all his previous births.
- ***Prarabdha karma*** - the part of ***sanchita karma***, which is to be experienced in the current incarnation.
- ***Agami karma*** - the newly created ***karma*** which will affect the future.

**Types of consequences**

- **Visible consequences** - This is the consequence of an action that can be seen. For example, when we give, we see what belonged to us has gone to the other. This is the physical and visible manifestation of the act.
- **Invisible consequences** - The merit or demerit an action accumulates is not visible to oneself or others. Charity, for instance, brings merit to the giver, which cannot be seen.

One experiences both visible and invisible consequences for his actions. The life one experiences as a doer and its consequences is ***samsara***. The Soul, therefore, is not a ***samsari***.

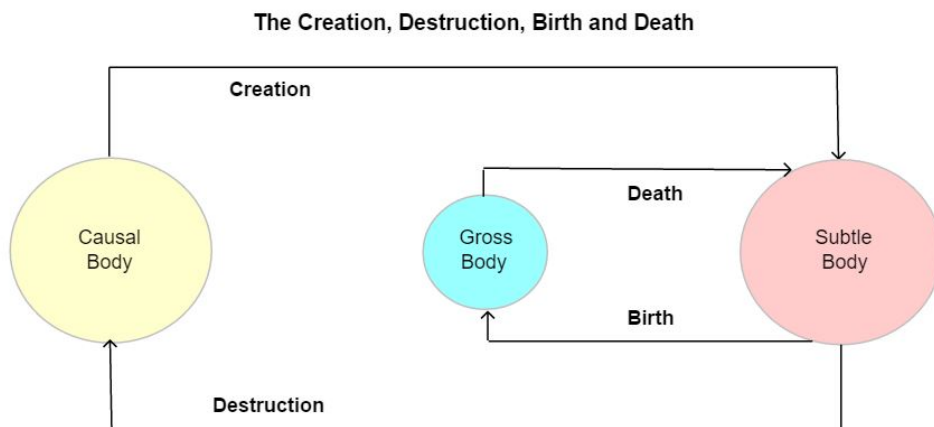
### Reincarnation

The merits and demerits one has collected are stored in his causal body. However, to experience joy and sorrow, a physical body is required. Therefore, from the causal body, based on the merits and demerits, the subtle body is obtained (the mind, intelligence, and internal organs). When the merits and the demerits collected results as the ***prarabdha karma*** (from the ***sanchita karma***), the subtle body chooses a suitable gross body to experience the consequences of its actions. This can be compared to the clothes one wears. One chooses clothes based on the job he is about to do. The subtle body chooses the gross body based on what it has to experience.

### Death of the gross body

When the ***prarabdha karma*** gets over, there is no reason for the gross body to exist. Irrespective of the age or the condition of the gross body, the subtle body sheds this body and moves into another gross body based on the next ***prarabdha karma***. Therefore, the death of the gross body can happen anytime, right from its existence (even before its birth) to any period of its physical manifestation.

When the clothes are no longer needed, they get discarded. The clothes do not decide when they should be discarded, but the one who wears them does. Similarly, the gross body does not have any control of its birth or death. The subtle body along, with the causal body, creates and discards the gross body.





### **Role of the Soul in reincarnation**

The Soul is the witness that remains unchanged throughout the process of reincarnation. The Soul is the reason for the existence of the causal and the subtle body. With the reflection of the Soul, the subtle body manifests itself and the gross body.

#### **Birth**

For birth to occur, a root cause is required. The root cause should have been there before birth. For example, a seed is the root cause of a tree. The seed is the unmanifest tree. Similarly, the root cause is the unmanifest, and birth is the manifested.

The manifested body is made up of the five elements (space, air, water, fire, and earth), it is guarded by these and after death breaks down into these five elements. During death, the manifested becomes unmanifest.

#### **Nothing is created during birth or destroyed during death.**

Death is only the change in the form, and so is birth. There is absolutely no loss or gain. The change in the states is called birth and death. An example of this process is our daily dissolution which is called *nitya pralaya*.

**Daily dissolution (*nitya pralaya*):** *Nitya pralaya* is the dissolution of one's day's occurrence during deep sleep. Our subtle body becomes unmanifest into our causal body during deep sleep and manifests again when we wake up. We unmanifest and manifest again and again every day.

## **Verses I7 – 28**

Lord Krishna said,

*Know that the Soul by which the body pervades is indestructible. No one can destroy the imperishable.* 2.17

*It is eternal, indestructible, immeasurable. Only the physical body is subjected to destruction. So, fight Arjuna.* 2.18

*Neither he who thinks the Soul kills or gets killed has the knowledge of the Soul, for It neither kills nor gets killed.* 2.19

*The Soul is neither born nor does it die. It has never not, not existed, nor has it ever manifested or will. It is not destroyed with the body.* 2.20

*How can a person kill or cause anyone to kill that which is indestructible, birthless and immutable?* 2.21

*Just like a person casts off his worn-out clothes and puts on new ones, so does the embodied Self casts off its worn-out body and enters a new one.* 2.22

*Weapons cannot pierce the Soul, fire cannot burn it, water cannot wet it, nor can the wind wither It.* 2.23

*The Soul cannot be cut, burnt, drenched or dried. It is eternal, all-pervading, unalterable, primordial and immovable.* 2.24

*The Soul is unmanifest, inconceivable and non-transformable. Knowing the nature of the Soul, there is no reason to lament It.* 2.25

Initially, Lord Krishna only speaks about the nature of the Soul and asks Arjuna to



fight on the grounds of its permanence.

Lord Krishna, unsure whether Arjuna laments for their perishable body or whether he believes the Soul is perishable too, address them in the following verses. So, for the sake of argument, Lord Krishna said,

*Even if you think that the Soul is subject to birth and death, you still have no reason to lament. 2.26*

*Death is certain for that which is born, as birth is for that which is dead. Therefore, grieve not for what is inevitable. 2.27*

*All beings are unmanifest in the beginning, manifested in the middle and become unmanifest again in the end. So, what is the need for grieving? 2.28*

Having detailed the eternal nature of the Soul, *Bhagavan* Krishna discusses why the knowledge of the Soul is astonishing.



### Self-Realisation (*Atma jnana*)

**The knowledge of the Soul is astonishing:** We obtain the knowledge of the objects around us by using our perceptive abilities with the help of our senses. The knowledge we obtain about an object is based on the experience we encounter with that object. So, we can say that the experiencer obtains the knowledge of that which is experienced. The knowledge is due to the interaction of the two:

- The experiencer
- The experienced

To obtain the knowledge of the Soul, one has to experience the Soul. When one experiences the Soul, the experiencer and the experienced become the same. The knower and the known become the same. This is astonishing.

### The Tenth One

Ten boys crossed a river. After crossing, one of them wanted to ensure that they have all crossed. He counted, and there were only nine. The boys sat beside the river grieving their loss. A wandering monk asked them why they were grieving. The boy replied, *we were ten when we started the journey from the other side of the river. Now we are only nine. We lost one.* The monk counted them. There were ten. He told the boy; you are the tenth. On realising this, the boys were extremely happy and relieved.

We see from this story:

1. The boy did not count himself at the beginning, which was the cause of his sadness.
2. He needed someone else (a teacher) to help him find himself.
3. He did not find anything new, and yet he became very happy.
4. He will never fail to count him again anymore now that he knows.

This story illustrates our everyday ignorant living. We will be happy and relieved when we realise the Soul, though it is nothing new. The Soul that is experienced by all living beings is mixed up with the body. The knowledge of the Soul, which lets us segregate the Soul from the transient, is astonishing. Self-realisation is astonishing.

**The teacher of the Soul is astonishing:** We define objects with their characteristic attributes. The Soul, however, does not have any such attributes to define. There isn't

a concept to teach. The Soul does not have a relationship with anything. It is only consciousness, and so it is hard to show one's Self to self. Therefore, the teacher of the Soul is astonishing.

**The learner of the Soul is astonishing:** Though all of us are born as *samsaris*, not everyone seeks liberation or even recognizes the *samsara* (the cycle of death and rebirth). Many don't even know there is a way to be freed from the cycle. So, the listener of this knowledge is rare and astonishing. There are, however, others who even after listening about the Soul, understand nothing. The Soul is hard to comprehend. It requires exceptional discipline, burning desire, and immense practice to acquire this knowledge.

## Verses 29 – 30

Lord Krishna said,

*Some behold the Soul in amazement, others describe It as astonishing, some hear about the Soul as marvellous, yet some others, even after hearing all about It cannot comprehend It at all. 2.29*

*Arjuna, the Soul that exists within all bodies, does not perish, even if the bodies perish. Do not lament for anyone. 2.30*

Lord Krishna spoke about both the Soul and body so far. If both of these were not the cause of Arjuna's sorrow, the only thing Arjuna could be worried about is whether it is sinful to kill. So, Lord Krishna explains the concept of *dharma* in detail.



## Part III

# The Duty

## Duty (*Dharma*)

There isn't an ideal one-word translation for *dharma* in western languages. *Dharma* can be loosely translated as one's duty and the code for proper conduct conforming to one's duty and nature. *Dharma* is also used to mean righteousness in certain contexts.

### Regular Duty (*Samanya dharma*)

The duties that apply to all human beings and do not change with time, place or person are called *samanya dharma*. For example, speaking the truth.

### Special Duty (*Vishesha Dharma*)

The duties that apply to all human beings, but changes from person to person, from time to time are called *vishesha dharma*. *Vishesha dharma* is based on one's *varnashrama*, which is a person's life stage and profession at that time. For instance, the duty of a warrior is different from that of a teacher.

Sometimes both duties can contradict. In such cases, *vishesha dharma* must take priority and should be enforced. For example, *samanya dharma* prohibits killing, but for a warrior (in a war) it is allowed according to his *vishesha dharma*.

### *Varnashrama*

*Varna* means colour. However, in this context, it is referred to the arrangement of society. Just like how different parts of the body like the head, hands, and legs, perform different and exclusive functions for one, different people in society have different and exclusive functions.

Based on what a person does for society he is categorized into one of the four castes. Every human belonged to one of the four naturally according to his innate nature and outward actions. The four castes:

- *Brahmins*: The *brahmins* are the priest of the temples, most of them are learned and scholarly who took up teaching.
- *Kshatriyas*: The *kshatriyas* are the rulers, warriors or administrators.
- *Vaishyas*: The *vaishyas* are agriculturalists or merchants.
- *Shudras*: The *shudras* are the labourers or the service providers.

#### The Society

Brahmins	Kshatriyas	Vaishyas	Shudras
The learned	The warriors	The merchants	The service providers

*Ashrama*: It is the division of a person's life into four stages. There are specific duties for each stage of one's life. The different stages of one's life can be classified as:

- *Brahmacharya*: *Brahmacharya* is the stage of life when a person is a student. He is prohibited from earning. His only goal is to learn.
- *Grihastha*: *Grihastha* means householder. It refers to one who leads a family life by being married and taking up the duties of maintaining a house and raising

a family.

- **Vanaprastha:** *Vanaprastha* means the forest dweller and denotes one who has retired from his household duties. His goal should be to withdraw from material pursuits.
- **Sannyasa:** *Sannyasa* is to renounce everything and seek liberation.

Life stages

<b>Brahmacharya</b> The student	<b>Grihastha</b> The householder	<b>Vanaprastha</b> The retired	<b>Sannyasa</b> The renunciant
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## Verses 31 – 39

Lord Krishna said,

*You being a warrior, should know that there is no better engagement for you than fighting a just war. Waver not in doing your duty.* 2.31

*Only the most fortunate of warriors are blessed with the opportunity of such a battle, which has come to you like a door to heaven.* 2.32

*But if you will not fight, then, having abandoned your duties, you will incur shame and sin.* 2.33

*People will speak of your infamy forever, and for the renowned, dishonor is worse than death.* 2.34

*The great warriors, who greatly honour you, will think that you left the battlefield because of fear and will ridicule you. Your enemies will mock you. And defame you. What could be more painful?* 2.35- 2.36

*If you are killed doing your duty, you will attain heaven. If you are victorious, you will enjoy the kingdom, so arise for the battle.* 2.37

*Treat pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat alike. Engage in the battle for the sake of the battle. You shall not incur sin.* 2.38

*What has been taught to you so far is the wisdom of **Sankhya**. Now listen to the wisdom of **yoga**, with which you will break through the bonds of your action.* 2.39

**Sankhya** is the wisdom of Self-realisation. It helps attain complete discrimination between the real and unreal and urges one to renounce the unreal. **Sankhya yoga** is the path of knowledge. It reveals the true nature of the Self. This path is meant for already qualified and disciplined seekers with high intellect for discrimination and undaunted willpower for renunciation. Most seekers are not qualified for **Sankhya**. They should first purify their minds through the discipline of **karma yoga**. **Bhagavan** Krishna explains **karma yoga** to Arjuna.



### **Karma Yoga**

**Karma** means action or work; **yoga** means disciplining the mind and the body to

achieve union with the Self.

*Karma yoga* is performing one's duty with discipline. It defines how one should do his duty and the attitude he should hold while doing his duty.

*Karma yoga* dictates that one should perform his duty in compliance with one's *dharma* without being attached to the fruits of his actions. Actions performed without attachment to the results do not create new *karma* but facilitate the doer to devote himself to the achievement of Self-realisation.

*Jnana yoga* is called the path of knowledge which leads to liberation. One has to qualify to acquire and establish with the knowledge. By performing *karma yoga*, one attains the qualifications to receive the knowledge of the Self.

**The benefits of *karma yoga***

- **There is no failure:** When one works for the results, it can succeed or fail. When the work is done as *karma yoga*, there is no failure.
- **There are no contrary effects:** The work done with a desire can have contrary effects, but that which is done as *karma yoga* does not have.
- **Completion is not the ultimate goal:** Completion is not the goal of *karma yoga*. Doing the duties with the right attitude is the goal. Anything done as *karma yoga* is enough to remove any fear of failure from one, even if only a small portion of the task is complete.

## Verses 40 – 44

Lord Krishna said,

*In this path, there is no loss nor contrary effects, and even a little advancement will save one from great fear.* 2.40

*In this path, there is one-pointed determination, whereas the intelligence of the irresolute is scattered and undecided.* 2.41

*The single-point resolution does not grow on one who is attached to pleasures and power. They are misled by flowery words of the unenlightened pleasure-seeking people, who constantly contend that there is no greater pleasure than heaven and regard the highest goal as performing various rituals from the Vedas to attain material profits and power.* 2.42 - 2.44

Lord Krishna explains *guna* in brief and details it further in later chapters.

### **Guna**

*Guna* is defined as the inherent nature of everyone and everything. They are three *gunas*:

1. *Sattva guna* is the quality of awareness, calmness, harmony, and purity.
2. *Rajas guna* is the quality of passion, activity, egoism, desire, and drive.
3. *Tamas guna* is the quality of delusion, dullness, inactivity, lethargy, ignorance, and destruction.

The entire universe is made from the three *gunas*. Everyone and everything have all three natures in different proportions. The balance of *gunas* can change and does in everything and everyone. The changes happen with internal or external influence.

### The Three Gunas

Tamas	Rajas	Sattva
Tamas is a dull mind.	Rajas is an active mind.	Sattva is a balanced mind.
A tamasic mind is a dull, lazy dark, inert, chaotic, impure, destructive, delusive, ignorant, imbalanced, and a violent mind.	A rajas mind is passionate, egoistic, self-centered, driven, dynamic, turbulent, goal-oriented, aggressive, and an intense mind.	A sattvic mind is a harmonious, pure, calm, positive, creative, constructive, peaceful, and an intelligent mind.
Hides awareness	Hides awareness	Reveals awareness

## Verses 45 – 46

Lord Krishna advises Arjuna to be a seeker with a single-minded determination. He said,

*Arjuna, be above these three **gunas** by remaining the same in duality, by remaining in the quality of **sattva**, by freeing yourself from attachments, by protecting what you have and by establishing in the Self.* 2.45

*For the knower of the Self, the ritualistic part of Vedas that which is chanted to attain material pleasure is as much use to him as a reservoir of water in a flooded place.* 2.46.

### Guidelines for **karma yoga**

#### 1. Work is a choice

The work is a choice. One can choose his work and can choose how to perform it.

#### 2. Non-attachment to the result

One has the right only to perform his duties but does not have the right over the results. The work should be performed without attachment to the results. Work performed with motive creates bondage.

#### 3. **Karma** creates bondage

Any action performed with desire creates bondage. The inevitable consequences of the action — the merits and the demerits are its bondage. The attitude behind the action brings one the invisible fruits of the action. This is not visible to oneself or others but manifests in the form of fortune or misfortune in one's life. This is the reason for the contradictions we see, some people struggle to manifest their desires, but for some, it comes easy.

That which we call luck is the invisible consequence of our actions which we have collected over several incarnations.

Though it is said one has the right only over his actions and not over the results, he is, however, responsible for the results, as his attitude behind the actions invariably keeps bringing him the invisible fruits.

#### 4. Inaction is not a solution

First of all, inaction is not possible. Secondly, just renouncing all actions and thereby not acquiring merits or demerits will not liberate one. If one renounces and refrains from performing any work before attaining purity of mind, he will become a **mithyachara** which means self-deluded. He will only renounce all pleasures externally and not from within. His mind will still be caught up in desires and thoughts of worldly pleasure. Like fasting, when the mind contemplates and craves food. When fasting,



both the mind and the body should be devoid of food. Therefore, inaction is not a solution, but the right attitude towards our actions is.

### **The right attitude towards work**

Our work can be broadly classified into:

- Duty
- Pleasure actions (*kamya karma*)

### **The right attitude towards duty**

#### **1. Non-duality in duty**

Even within our duties, certain aspects are enjoyable while others are not. Our likes and dislikes should not interfere with our duty. Irrespective of whether or not we like it, if it is our duty, we must deliver it. We must also accept the outcome of our duty with a non-dual attitude.

#### **2. Non-guilty**

We can see success and failure equally only when we have given our best at work. The strength to accept what we receive comes only from doing the work correctly. Otherwise, we will be left with guilt alone. Therefore, one must fully engage in one's duty with dedication.

#### **3. Non-entitlement to right**

When we offer something to someone, we expect right over them. We believe they are entitled to help us back. *Karma yoga* is doing one's duty without the expectation of any entitlement.

#### **4. Offer all actions to God (*Ishvara arpana buddhi*)**

When we offer something to God, we don't expect right over Him. We offer because we want to. This is called *Ishvara arpana buddhi*. Our duties should be performed in the same way.

We are in a position to help others due to our *prarabdha karma* (the *karma* which is to be experienced in the present incarnation). We should look at this as an opportunity to help others and not exercise right over them. The work performed should be considered a sacrifice and not an entitlement.

### **The right attitude towards work done for pleasure**

*Kama* means pleasure. Work done purely for pleasure is called *kamya karma*. One who intends to progress spiritually must reduce actions performed purely for pleasure and eventually stop them altogether.

*Kamya karma* itself is done to attain a specific gain. So, we can expect results from it, but all results of *kamya karma* should be accepted as God's grace.

### **Accept all results as God's grace (*Prasada buddhi*)**

*Prasada* is food dedicated to God during worship and thereafter eaten by the devotees as something holy. When the outcome of the action is accepted as *prasada*, its shortcomings are also accepted. Irrespective of what is received, it is taken without expectations or criticisms. *Prasada buddhi* brings tranquillity even when enjoying pleasures.

When everything pleasurable is first offered to God and received as his grace, one will eventually free himself from very lowly world pleasures. Any animalistic attitude associated with pursuing material pleasure will soon leave him.

### **Consequences of *karma yoga***

#### **Releases bondage**

Any action creates bondage. Apart from accumulating merits and demerits, actions create imprints in our minds as likes and dislikes, which are carried on by us incarnations after incarnations. We again perform actions based on our likes and dislikes creating a vicious cycle of actions. This is bondage. Actions with motive keep us in *samsara*.



Actions performed as *karma yoga* does not create bondage or consequences, it results in purity of mind for the performer.

### The purity of mind (*Chitta shuddhi*)

Only a pure mind devoid of the spectrum of emotions has the ability to gain and establish with the knowledge of the Self.

*Karma* invariably brings in merits or demerits for one. The same *karma*, when performed as *karma yoga*, does not result in merits or demerits, instead purifies the mind of the *yogi* from the spectrum of emotions.

*Karma phala* of *karma yoga* is *chitta shuddhi*. The fruit of *karma yoga* is attaining purity of mind.

A *karma yogi* uses actions that create bondage to bring him purity of mind which liberates him from *samsara*. *Karma yoga* is, therefore, the first step towards liberation.

#### The Consequences of Karma

<p><b>Karma</b> → Mental imprints → Merits / Demerits</p> <p><b>Creates bondage and samasara</b></p>	<p><b>Karma Yoga</b> → Purity of mind</p> <p><b>Does not create bondage or samsara</b></p>
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## Verses 47 – 50

Lord Krishna said,

*You only have the right to work, not to its results. Do not let your actions create fruits, nor is inaction an option.* 2.47

*Perform your duties established in *yoga*. Abandon attachment and remain the same in both success and failure. This evenness of mind is called *yoga*.* 2.48

*Working for fruits is very inferior; those working for fruits deserve pity. Keep evenness in the results. Surrender to this evenness.* 2.49

*With even mind, engage in the devotional service to rid yourself of good and bad fruits. The expertise lies in the practice of this *yoga*; devote yourself to it.* 2.50

*Karma yoga* is a vast subject. The next chapter is entirely dedicated to it. Lord Krishna concludes this chapter by talking about liberation — the ultimate human goal.



## Part IV

# Liberation

### Liberation — The ultimate human goal

The scriptures define four goals, pursuing which help one lead a fulfilling life. They are called *purusarthas* which means objects of human pursuit. The four goals are:

1. *Dharma* — leading a righteous life in accordance with one's duty.
2. *Artha* — a source of living which includes wealth, career, and success.
3. *Kama* — desire, passion, the pleasure of the senses, love.
4. *Moksha* — to attain liberation from *samsara*.

Liberation is considered the ultimate human goal referred to as *paramapurushartha*, *param* means the highest.

Human birth is very rare. One gets a human birth after having wandered through other life forms. Only through the human form can one attain liberation. If one achieves the ultimate human goal, the human life is complete, and he does not have to take birth again. If he does not attain the ultimate goal, he will remain in *samsara*, wandering from birth to death and from death to birth.

Lord Krishna details the path to attain liberation. He talks about the two *yogas*, completion of which leads to liberation:

- *Karma yoga*
- *Jnana yoga*

Performing actions in accordance with *karma yoga* qualifies one for *jnana yoga*. *Jnana* means knowledge, which is referred to the Cosmic knowledge. Successful completion of *jnana yoga* leads to liberation.

### When does one qualify for *jnana yoga* through *karma yoga*?

Intellect is one's greatest gift, but everyone is born with a delusion in the intellect. When the intellect is corrupt, one loses the ability to discriminate between the real and the unreal, so instead of pursuing the ultimate goal, he is caught up chasing temporary material pleasures. He will not make any attempts to come out of *samsara*. This is a journey from death to death. Until the delusion is present in the intellect, one will not hold the right aim in life.

### *Karma yoga* removes delusion

When we lead our life according to *karma yoga*, the consequences of our actions result in the purity of mind. When the delusion in the intellect is removed, the goals become clear.

### *Karma yogi* attains renunciation

Renunciation is not an act; it is a way of life. It has to come to one naturally. We try to take pleasure out of every object we see. When we use objects purely for survival and not for pleasure, we have renounced them. When the mind is pure, and the goal is clear renunciation becomes the way of life.

Through *karma yoga*, one will not only renounce the objects he has experienced but also the ones he will encounter. *Karma yoga* removes indulgence (*bhoga*) from our minds.

He whose intellect is clear from delusion and can renounce worldly pleasures

has experienced the fruits of *karma yoga*.

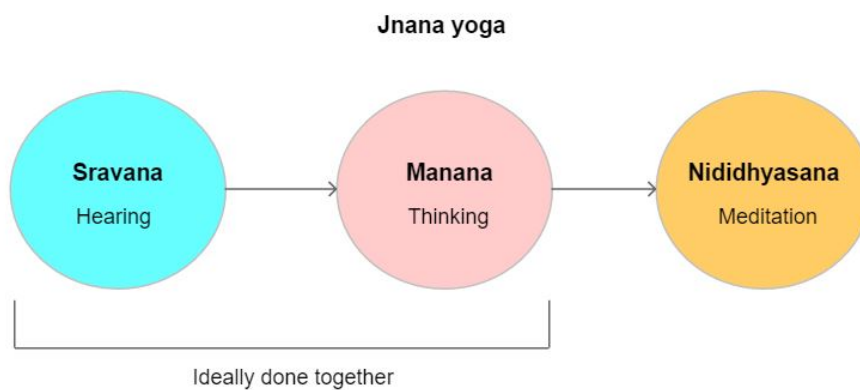
***Karma yoga* leads to the desire for liberation (*Mumukshutva*)**

When one's goal becomes clear and has renounced everything, the desire for liberation is all there is. He is ready for *jnana yoga* and can now leave his duties behind to seek knowledge.

### **Self-Realisation (*Jnana yoga*)**

*Jnana yoga* is called the path of knowledge. It consists of three practices mentioned below:

1. *Sravana* is listening to the teacher until one understands.
2. *Manana* is contemplating what was thought until one has a clear understanding of it.
3. *Nididhyasana* is meditating. One should meditate until the knower, and the known become the same.



### **How will one know if he is liberated?**

When one is undisturbed by external stimuli from his sense organs, his mind does not lose control of the inner serenity, and if he can remain one point focused on the Self, he is considered to have attained *samadhi*.

*Samadhi* is the highest kind of consciousness wherein oneness is achieved with the object of meditation. In *yoga*, *samadhi* is regarded as the final stage, at which union with the divine is reached.

## **Verses 51 – 54**

Lord Krishna said,

*Men of wisdom cast off the fruits of action and thus free themselves from the cycles of births and reach the plane beyond all suffering.* 2.51

*When your intelligence crosses beyond the mire of delusion, then you shall achieve indifference to all that you have heard (about worldly pleasures) and the ones you will.* 2.52

*When your mind is no longer disturbed by the contradictions of the Vedas (parts with rituals for material gain), and when it remains fixed in the trance of Self-realisation, then you will have attained liberation.* 2.53

Lord Krishna thus spoke about the Soul, the body, *karma yoga* and *jnana yoga*. Arjuna, intrigued by this knowledge, wants to know the characteristics of a person

who has attained wisdom and reached *samadhi*.

Arjuna said,

*What are the characteristics of the person who has firmly established wisdom and is fully merged in the superconscious state (samadhi)? How does he speak, be and act?* 2.54

Lord Krishna, in reply to Arjuna, talks about the:

- The characteristics of the wise.
- The means to achieve wisdom.

### **The characteristics of the wise**

**The wise have no desires:** Desire creates bondage. Desires, when fulfilled, give a sense of completion to him who does not have the wisdom. When one feels a lack in life, he tries to fill it up with the objects of his desire.

He identifies himself as the body and mind, so he takes up their characteristics. The body and mind can never be satisfied. The wise identifies himself as the Soul, and with this knowledge, he is content in himself. Desires don't arise when one is content. When nothing is missing in one, he does not have to fill up with objects of desire to achieve a sense of contentment. The knowledge of Self is achieved through enormous practice and is not present in one as an inherent nature.

**Equipoise:** All humans experience both sorrow and happiness. No one experiences only sorrow or only happiness throughout one's life. Birth is because of the manifestation of the accumulated invisible fruits of actions – the merits and demerits. The merits and demerit one has collected over several lifetimes manifest as *prarabdha karma* (the *karma* which is to be experienced in the present incarnation). The merits create desirable situations and demerits the undesirable. *Prarabdha karma*, however, only gives one the situations. How one responds to it is one's free will. Treating both desired and undesired situations alike is wisdom. Resistance to undesired situations is *samsara*.

The wise, when faced with adverse situations, does not let his mind agitate, nor is he elated in desirable situations. The wise is neither addicted to pleasure nor abhors displeasure. The wise do not experience attachment, fear or anger. There is a change deep within him that only he experiences and no one else can see.

The student who intends to attain wisdom must practice the characteristics of the wise. For the wise, however, these characteristics are his natural state.

## **Verses 55 – 57**

Lord Krishna said,

*When one gives up all varieties of desire for sense gratification, and when his mind is purified, he finds satisfaction in the Self alone, then his wisdom is firmly established.* 2.55

*One who is undisturbed by sorrow, does not hanker on pleasure, and is free from attachment, fear, and anger is called a sage of steady wisdom.* 2.56

*He, who is not attached, neither rejoices nor grieves. His wisdom is firmly fixed.* 2.57

Lord Krishna explains how one can standstill in the knowledge attained.

## **The means to achieve wisdom**

### **Meditation (*Nididhyasana*)**

Constant contemplation of the knowledge of the Self is the path to becoming enlightened. After acquiring the knowledge, the knowledge which is in the mind has to assimilate deep within oneself. Without meditating, the acquired knowledge will slip through in one's everyday chores.

### **Two important prerequisites for meditation**

- *Dama* — control of external sense organs.
- *Sama* — control of the mind.

Control of external sense organs and the mind are also the qualifications required to receive the teachings which we have seen briefly under the six-fold path.

When meditation is done with *dama* and *sama*, one will be able to establish with the knowledge. When the mind is agitated due to sorrow or elated due to joy, it loses its calm. A turbulent mind cannot retain the acquired knowledge.

**Control of sense organs:** There are five sense organs through which the mind gets information. By controlling these sense organs, the mind can be calmed. Not seeing, hearing, speaking, smelling and touching what is not required is called *dama*.

These five senses are withdrawn from one in sleep and in a superconscious state. Controlling the senses in the waking state requires practice.

A wise man is compared to a tortoise. Five parts (its four limbs and head) of a tortoise are compared with his five sense organs. When a tortoise is in an unsafe environment, it pulls its head and limbs inside the shell to protect itself.

Similarly, the wise pulls his external senses inside to protect his serenity from any distractions.

**Control of the mind:** Even when all the senses are under control, the mind can ruin itself without any external factors. The mind is capable of thinking unnecessary and destructive thoughts. It can brood on happy or sad memories or think about the future and can get agitated. This way it, gets turbulent, which is not fit for meditation. Controlling the mind to get it fit for meditation is called *sama*.

### **Abstinence from external experience**

On beginning the journey of refraining from the external stimuli and keeping the mind under control, one just achieves abstinence from the experience of it. He is only removing his experience from it but will still be attached to the objects of his desire. This abstinence is like fasting with the constant thought of food.

One can separate himself from the object of temptation and think he has renounced it, but the temptation may lie dormant in him only to surface on sudden contact with it. One will fail several times while learning to control his senses but must go steady in practice. Physical renunciation should also be accompanied by mental renunciation by constantly discriminating the temporary from the permanent.

For the liberated, abstinence is his way of life. He is not attempting to refrain from anything, as there is no attachment to the world. Abstinence is the innate nature of the liberated and not an effort for him. His mind is focused on the Self, and he is satisfied in himself and there is nothing required to fulfil him.

Complete abstinence comes only with practice, and a beginner must pursue this path with patience, even if the thoughts of desires come up in the mind.

### **The power of the senses**

The senses are extremely powerful. They can forcefully take control of one. No one is safe from the senses, not even a nearly perfect wise man, until he establishes the unbreakable union with the Self.

When the senses take over the mind, the mind loses its functioning ability. It is no longer calm and contemplating the Self. It is impossible to shut the senses down completely while living among others. In such cases, one must control the mind and

not meditate on distractions. All distractions must be blocked. One should choose what to meditate on, on the Self or on the objects of desire.

### **Consequences of non-control**

The non-control of the mind and the senses leads to ruining one's life. Lord Krishna explains how a human life would be wasted without control:

- The mind contemplates the object (or person) of its desire.
- The mind gets attached to the object and thinks that it brings him pleasure.
- From desire comes the craving to experience the object. One believes the object would fulfil him and make him happy.
- When the desire is unfulfilled or if someone or something is a barrier for one to experience his desire, he is enraged.
- Anger impairs judgment and deludes the mind.
- A deluded mind destroys the memory of what was learned, and with the memory gone, his intellect is no longer useful to him. He loses his aim and wastes a human life without achieving the ultimate human goal — liberation.

## **Verses 58 – 63**

Lord Krishna said,

*A yogi who withdraws his senses from objects, like a tortoise withdrawing its limbs, can be established in wisdom firmly.* 2.58

*An abstinent man may restrict himself from the sense enjoyment, but the taste for it still lingers. On experiencing the Supreme, he is freed even from the longing.* 2.59

*The senses are so strong and impetuous that they can forcefully plunder the mind of even the nearly wise striving for liberation.* 2.60

*He who unites his consciousness in Me, having subjugated his senses, will establish steady wisdom.* 2.61

*When thoughts dwell on the objects of the senses, attachment arises from it desire, from desire anger. Anger breeds delusion, from delusion bewilderment of the memory which destroys one's intellect; one perishes when his intellect perishes.* 2.62 - 2.63

### **Benefits of sense control**

The path to the ultimate human goal (liberation) is only through the territory of temptations. The mind and the senses have their own aversion and attraction to objects. A man with mental discipline approaches these sense objects with a mind free from attraction and repulsion.

When the mind is controlled, even when it moves among the sense objects, there is neither attachment nor repulsion towards them. This destroys the agitation of the mind. Without agitation, the mind attains tranquillity, and the tranquil mind can establish with the acquired knowledge.

### **Janaka and Shuka**

Shuka attained the knowledge of *Brahman* (Absolute Reality) at a very early age. To ensure he has indeed reached the highest, his father sent him to Janaka, a wise king. Janaka, foreseeing the coming of Shuka, ordered his guards to keep him waiting



outside without food, water or sleep. After three days, he was honoured and was provided with all the royal luxuries. After eight days, he was taken to Janaka, who was being entertained by beautiful dancing girls in his court. The king handed Shuka a cup of oil, full to its brim and asked him to walk with it around the room seven times. Shuka, whose mind was tranquil and his senses under control, walked as ordered without spilling a drop. Janaka embraced him and said, *My dear child! What is there more for you to learn? Neither defame nor royal honour or any temptation of the senses can touch you. You hold the wisdom of [Brahman](#). You can go back home now.*

## Verses 64 – 68

Lord Krishna said,

*The self-controlled, roaming in the material world with subjugated senses, free from both attraction and repulsion, attains tranquillity.* 2.64

*When one attains tranquillity his sorrows are dispelled and his wisdom swiftly becomes steadfast.* 2.65

*One without self-control cannot establish with the wisdom. To the unsteady, no meditation is possible. Without meditation, there is no peace. Without peace, where is the hope for happiness?* 2.66

*As the wind carries away a boat on the water, so does the mind that succumbs to wandering senses carries away one's discrimination.* 2.67

*His wisdom is steady, whose senses are subjugated with regard to their objects.* 2.68

After detailing the importance of control, Lord Krishna discusses the knowledge [jnana yoga](#) imparts.



### Non-Duality ([Advaita](#))

[Advaita](#) means non-dual, not two, one undivided without a second. The central idea of [advaita](#) is, [Atman](#) is [Brahman](#)

### [Atman](#) is [Brahman](#)

[Atman](#) (Soul) is the essence of every individual living being. [Brahman](#) means Absolute Reality. It is the Cosmic Soul, the eternal essence of the universe. [Brahman](#) is the life source of all that has been, is and will be throughout the entire cosmos. [Brahman](#) is defined as the omnipresent, eternal spiritual source of the universe. It is the source of all that exists and is present in all that exists. [Atman](#) is [Brahman](#), is [advaita](#).





*This is my Soul in the innermost heart, greater than the earth,  
greater than the aerial space, greater than these worlds. This Soul,  
this Self of mine, is that **Brahman**.*

- Chandogya Upanishad 3.14.3 - 3.14.4

### **The ignorant and the wise**

For the one whose wisdom is not established, the nature of the Soul is kept in the dark. He looks at his physical body and thinks he experiences the world separate from him. For him, the knowledge of non-duality is dark. The illusion keeps him awake in the material world and keeps him asleep to the knowledge of non-duality.

The wise, however, slumber to the indifference of the material world and is wide awake in the wisdom of non-duality. Therefore, it is said, during that which is the night for all, the liberated is awake, and during that which is the day for all, he is asleep. The ignorant sees the world and searches for God, never finding him. For the liberated, everything is the manifestation of God.

*I am other than name, form, and action. My nature is ever free! I  
am Self, the supreme unconditioned **Brahman**. I am pure  
Awareness, always non-dual.*

- Adi Shankara, Upadesasahasri 11.7

### **Liberation (**Moksha**, **Mukti**)**

The ultimate motive of *jnana yoga* is liberation. The two types of liberation are:

**Jivanmukti**: *Jiva* means life, *mukti* means liberation. *Jivanmukti* is achieving liberation while alive. *Jivanmukta* is someone who has attained liberation while still alive. A *jivanmukta* is also called *Atma jnani* (Self-realised) and *Brahma jnani* (knower of the *Brahman*).

**Videhamukti**: *Videha* means without the body. *Videhamukti* means liberation after death.

#### **Liberation**

<b>Jivanmukti</b>	<b>Videhamukti</b>
Liberation while alive	Liberation after death

Lord Krishna says the liberated attain a state called *Brahmisthiti*. *Brahmisthiti* is the state of being established in *Brahman*. The person who attains *Brahmisthiti* is called a *sthitaprajna*. *Sthitaprajna* means a person whose wisdom is steady.

### ***Brahmisthiti***

*Brahmisthiti* means steadiness of the mind on *Brahman*. The state of being established in *Brahman*. For the one who has achieved *Brahmisthiti*, there is no falling back in delusion. There is no attachment and, therefore, no *samsara*. He is liberated. He has freed himself from all material bondage and has abandoned all desires, and is free from longing. He has extinguished his ego in the Absolute and is united with it. He does not have an "I" and "mine" and is in great peace. He attains what is called *Brahma-nirvana*. *Brahma-nirvana* means absorption into *Brahman*.

## **Verses 69 – 72**

Lord Krishna said,

*In that which is the night for all beings, the Self mastered is awake. And in that which is the day for all beings, it is the night for the sage who sees.* 2.69

*He is full of contentment into whom all desires enter like the water entering the ocean, which is full, still, and unchanged, but not for the one who nurtures the desires.* 2.70

*He attains peace, who abandons all desires, longing, 'I' and 'mine-ness'. He alone attains real peace who is one with *Brahman*. Having attained *Brahmisthiti*, he is no more deluded. Being established therein, even if at the hour of death, one attains *Brahma-nirvana*.* 2.71-2.72



**Aum Tat Sat**

# Summary

## Part I - Plea for Guidance

- This chapter is called *Sankhya yoga*, and it is considered the index chapter of the Gita.
- *Samsara* means aimless wandering; it is the cycle of death and rebirth. Everyone is born a *samsari*.
- *Moksha* means liberation and liberation is the only way to break the cycle of death and rebirth.
- Liberation is achieved through penance with the guidance of a teacher.
- The cause of grief is not the situation but the association with the situation. The "I" and "mine" in the situation.
- The body is *anatma* which means non-soul. It is lifeless. The three bodies are the gross body, the subtle body, and the causal body.
- The gross body is the physical body made up of the five primordial elements.
- The subtle body consists of the five subtle elements of perception, response, life force, mind, and intellect.
- The causal body is the seed of the subtle and the gross body. One's merits and demerits stay in the causal body.

## Part II - The Eternal

- *Atma* (Soul) is pure consciousness and is the essence of every living thing.
- The body that is lifeless is illuminated by the reflection of the Soul's consciousness in one's intellect. This is called *chidabhasa*.
- During death, the subtle body, along with the reflection of the Soul, leaves the gross body.
- *Sat* (truth) is that which always exists independently.
- *Mithya* (delusion) is that which exists only in one's imagination and is removed by knowledge.
- *Asat* (untrue) is that which does not have an existence.
- *Brahman* is the Cosmic Soul. *Brahman* is the source of all that exists and is present in all that exists.
- The Soul that is eternal exists in all three states of consciousness: the awake, the dream, and the deep sleep.
- The Soul is independent, unchanging, omnipresent, imperishable, indestructible, eternal, immeasurable, is a non-doer and a non-reaper.
- When the merit and demerit come out as *prarabdha karma*, the subtle body chooses a suitable gross body to experience the consequences of its actions.
- When the *prarabdha karma* gets over, there is no reason for the gross body to exist. Irrespective of the age or the condition of the gross body, the subtle body sheds this body and moves into another gross body based on the next *prarabdha karma*.
- The Soul is the witness that remains unchanged throughout the process of reincarnation.
- Birth is the manifestation of the unmanifest. During death, the manifested becomes unmanifest. Nothing is created or destroyed.
- During sleep, our subtle body unmanifest into our causal body and manifests again when we wake up.
- To obtain the knowledge of the Soul, one has to experience the Soul. When one experiences the Soul, the experiencer, and the experienced become the same.

### Part III - The Duty

- The duties that apply to all human beings and do not change with time, place or person are called *samanya dharma*. For example, speaking the truth.
- The duties that apply to all human beings but change from person to person, time to time, are called *vishesha dharma*. *Vishesha dharma* is based on one's *varnashrama*, which is a person's stage and profession at that time.
- *Guna* is defined as the inherent nature of everyone and everything.
- They are three *gunas*: *Sattva guna* is the quality of awareness. *Rajas guna* is the quality of passion. *Tamas guna* is the quality of dullness.
- *Karma yoga* is performing one's duty without attachment or entitlement to the right.
- All actions done for pleasure should be done as an offering to God, and the outcome should be received as God's grace.
- *Karma yoga* purifies the mind.
- Actions create merits or demerits. Performing actions as *karma yoga* release one from bondage.

### Part - IV - Liberation

- Freedom from *samsara* is liberation. Liberation is the ultimate human goal.
- *Karma yoga* removes delusion and aids in renunciation and gives one the desire to seek liberation.
- *Jnana yoga* is listening, contemplating and meditating on the knowledge of the Self.
- *Samadhi* is the highest kind of consciousness wherein oneness is achieved with the object of meditation. According to *yoga*, *samadhi* is regarded as the final stage at which union with the divine is reached.
- The two important prerequisites for meditation are control of external sense organs and the control of the mind.
- *Advaita* means non-duality. It conveys *Atman* is *Brahman*.
- *Jivanmukti* means liberation while still alive.
- *Videhamukti* means liberation without the body (after death).
- *Brahmishthiti* means steadiness of the mind on *Brahman*.
- *Brahma-nirvana* is absorption into *Brahman*.

# Karma Yoga

## Chapter 3



*Bhagavan* Krishna explains what *karma yoga* is and how to perform it. This chapter is about *karma* (actions) and details what actions one must perform and what one must not. Lord Krishna emphasizes performing one's duties and discusses the consequences of not performing. Actions create bondage. The motive behind every action creates merits or demerits. Lord Krishna details what kind of actions lead to bondage and what does not and how *karma* performed as *karma yoga* lead to the greater good.



## Part I

# Arjuna's Question

## Verses 1 – 2

Lord Krishna advised Arjuna to perform his duties without attachment and also said inaction is not an option. He advocated to Arjuna about the path of knowledge through which one can achieve the ultimate human goal — liberation through renunciation. These conflicting paths seem to confuse Arjuna. He wonders which path he must take — the path of knowledge or the path of action. Arjuna asked,

*If wisdom is superior to action, why do you ask me to engage in this terrible action? 3.1*

*There seems to be ambiguity, and I am confused as to which path to pursue, the path of knowledge or the path of action. Please tell me for certain by which I shall attain the highest goal. 3.2*

In reply to Arjuna's question, Lord Krishna says that He has given a two-fold path to mankind — the path of knowledge for the wise and the path of selfless action for those in action.

### The two paths

1. *Pravritti marga*
2. *Nivritti marga*

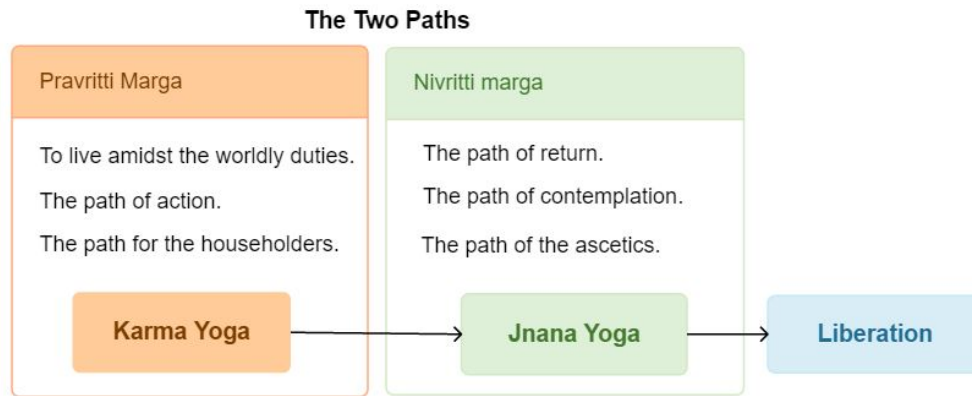
**Pravritti marga:** *Pravritti marga* is to live amidst worldly duties with the senses and the actions directed towards the external world. This path is suggested for the householders. *Karma yoga* is *pravritti marga*.

Though this path does not directly lead to liberation, it is equally relevant in spiritual development and, therefore, should not be regarded as inferior to the path of knowledge.

**Nivritti marga:** *Nivritti marga* is called the path of return. In this path, one turns within for spiritual contemplation after leaving all his duties behind further to fulfilling his family and professional needs.

One cannot just disregard one's duties and start seeking knowledge. He has to pursue *pravritti marga* first to satisfy his materialistic desires. One must serve his family and society and cultivate renunciation further to which he can enter the path of knowledge. We all have desires. It is hard to renounce and move on to the path of knowledge right away.

*Nivritti marga* is the path for the ascetics (*sannyasis*). *Jnana yoga*, which is *nivritti marga*, leads to liberation. *Jnana yoga*, however, is the result of *karma yoga*. When both *yogas* are performed well, it invariably leads to liberation.



### The **ashrams** and the two paths

The Vedas divide a person's life into four stages. They are called **ashrams**. The four **ashrams** are:

1. Student (**Brahmacharya**)
2. Householder (**Grihastha**)
3. Retired (**Vanaprastha**)
4. Ascetic (**Sannyasa**)

Among these four lifestyles (**ashrams**), the householder lifestyle is best suited to perform **karma yoga**. Other lifestyles do not provide as much opportunity for **karma yoga** as this **ashram**. Likewise, after retiring from the duties and renouncing, it is more favourable to perform **jnana yoga**. However, just living a particular lifestyle alone will not bring one the result of **yoga**. One must take efforts and perform them with perfection. One will not be liberated by simply leading an ascetic lifestyle. Also, it is possible to attain liberation even by leading a lifestyle of a house-holder if one acquires the knowledge of Self and establishes union with that knowledge.

### Lifestyles and the paths

1. One cannot take the path of knowledge without taking the path of action.
2. Leading a certain lifestyle alone will not yield results.
3. Both **karma yoga** and **jnana yoga** should be perfected for liberation.

## Verse 3

Lord Krishna said,

*As I said earlier, I have given a two-fold path for salvation, the path of knowledge for the renunciants and the path of work for men of action.*

3.3

Lord Krishna mentions that He has discussed this before, and by before, He means in one of His earlier incarnations. Lord Krishna is one of the **avatars** of Vishnu. Vishnu is one of the three supreme deities of the Hindus (**Trimurti**). He is the protector, whilst Brahma is the creator and Shiva the destroyer. Vishnu is said to take various incarnations to protect the world and restore righteousness whenever it is threatened by evil.

*Whenever there is a decline in righteousness and predominance of unrighteousness, I manifest myself.*

- Bhagavad Gita 4.7



## Dashavatara

*Dasa* means ten, and *avatar* means descending (incarnation). *Dashavatara* refers to the ten main *avatars* of Vishnu. The very popular epics Mahabharata and Ramayana detail Vishnu's *avatar* as Krishna and Rama, respectively. The ten *avatars* of Vishnu are:

1. Fish (*Matsya*)
2. Tortoise (*Kurma*)
3. Boar (*Varaha*)
4. Half-man, Half-lion (*Narasimha*)
5. Dwarf (*Vamana*)
6. Parashurama
7. Rama
8. Balarama
9. Krishna
10. Kalki (yet to be incarnated)

Dashavatara - a 19th century work



Lord Krishna further discusses inaction in reply to Arjuna's question.

### Inaction is not a solution

Inaction is not a means to liberation. Inaction must come as a fruit of *jnana yoga* (knowledge), but it is not *yoga*. Not beginning the work is not finishing the work. One will not be able to attain liberation without doing any work.

### Inaction is not possible

Everyone is pushed into action because of the three *gunas*: *tamas* — the quality of dullness, *rajas* — the quality of passion, *sattva* — the quality of awareness. Even if one remains inactive physically, his mind and intellect is always active. As long as one identifies with one's body, one will be acting out of the influence of these *gunas* of the body. The wise, whose consciousness is in his Self, is a non-doer. He is just an observer of his body, which is acting because of the *gunas*.

### Inaction leads to spiritual failure

Without proper action, one cannot attain purity of mind, and without purity of mind, it is not possible to renounce and seek knowledge. Just by restraining the sense, one cannot get his mind under control. He will only be able to renounce at the physical level and not at the mental level. Without mental renunciation leaving one's duties and entering ascetic life will only lead to failure. He will become self-deluded (*mithyacharya*).

An active mind and an actionless body do not lead one to liberation but will only produce contrary effects. One must control his sense organs along with his mind and perform *karma yoga* to purify his mind.

## Verses 4 – 7

Lord Krishna said,

*Inaction does not lead anyone to actionlessness, nor does mere renunciation lead one to perfection.* 3.4

*No one can remain in inaction even for a moment. Everyone is impelled into actions by the [gunas](#).* 3.5

*The one who restrains his organs of action but whose mind continues to dwell on the objects of the senses deludes himself. He is a hypocrite.* 3.6

*Superior is one who disciplines his senses along with his mind and directs his organs of action to work unattached.* 3.7



## Part II

# Karma Yoga

### Karma yoga

*Karma yoga* can be broadly classified into:

1. Actions
2. Attitude

### Actions

Actions can be divided into two categories:

1. Permitted actions (*Vidhi*)
2. Forbidden actions (*Nishidha karma*)

### Permitted actions

Permitted actions can be further classified into:

1. Actions that arise from one's likes and dislikes.
2. Actions that arise from one's intellect because of one's sense of duty.

**Actions that arise from one's likes and dislikes can be further classified into:**

1. *Nishidha Karma*
2. *Prayaschitta Karma*
3. *Kamya Karma*

### *Nishidha Karma*

*Nishidha karma* are actions that are entirely forbidden in the Vedas. One should not perform any actions that are mentioned under *nishidha karma*. These are actions that many are inherently inclined to do if they were not prohibited and left entirely to one's likes and dislikes. *Nishidha Karma* is considered unlawful and performing these actions will lead to a breach of righteousness. Some actions are prohibited on the grounds of justice, while others are prohibited as they are detrimental to one's spiritual progress. Some examples are:

- Homicide
- Stealing
- Intoxication, etc.

One incurs demerits performing the prohibited actions but will not acquire merits if not performed.

### *Prayaschitta Karma*

*Prayaschitta Karma* are actions performed to compensate for the sins committed or to reduce the consequences of past sins when experiencing them. There are rituals in the scriptures that can be performed to negate or reduce the impact of one's *karma*. However, *prayaschitta karma* itself has consequences. On negating difficulties, one will not be able to build up the mental strength which he would otherwise have by facing adversities. Everyone faces difficulties in their lifetime. No one can live so carefully that they don't encounter sorrow at all in their lifetime. Every tough situation strengthens us mentally and removes negative *prarabdha* (*prarabdha karma* is the part of all accumulated *karma*, which is to be experienced through the present incarnation). The more adverse the situation is, the more purified one gets.

*Prayaschitta* is essentially taking a different pain than the one he is experiencing or will experience. *Prayaschitta* is doing a deed that will generate merits to nullify the demerits accumulated by the sin one is experiencing or will experience. An example of *prayaschitta karma* is giving away wealth in exchange for health. A sick wealthy man may choose to donate his wealth in the hope of recovery.

*Prarabdha*, however, is invisible, and one cannot see its strength. On performing *prayaschitta karma*, only certain *prarabdha* can be negated, and no one can be certain which ones can be and which ones can't be. Some *prarabdhas* are so strong that one can only gain the strength to withstand them by doing *prayaschitta karma*.

*Prayaschitta karma* is, therefore, not recommended in *karma yoga*, but it is not forbidden also. They are expected to be reduced when one progresses spiritually.

### ***Kamya Karma***

Actions done purely for the gratification of senses without any obligatory reasons are called *kamya karma*. *Kamya karma* is not forbidden in *karma yoga*. However, as one progresses spiritually, he should and will start reducing these actions.

It is not easy to just quit these actions all at once. The renunciation attitude must be built slowly. If one renounces all the pleasure actions at once, he will become self-deluded (*mithyacharya*). It is like fasting, with thoughts on food. For the one who performs *karma yoga*, abstinence from such actions comes as the fruits of virtuous life led.

### **Actions that arise from one's intellect because of one's sense of duty**

We perform certain actions as our intellect dictates us to perform them. One does these out of compulsion, defeating his likes and dislikes for these actions. They are also one's duties. These actions are split into:

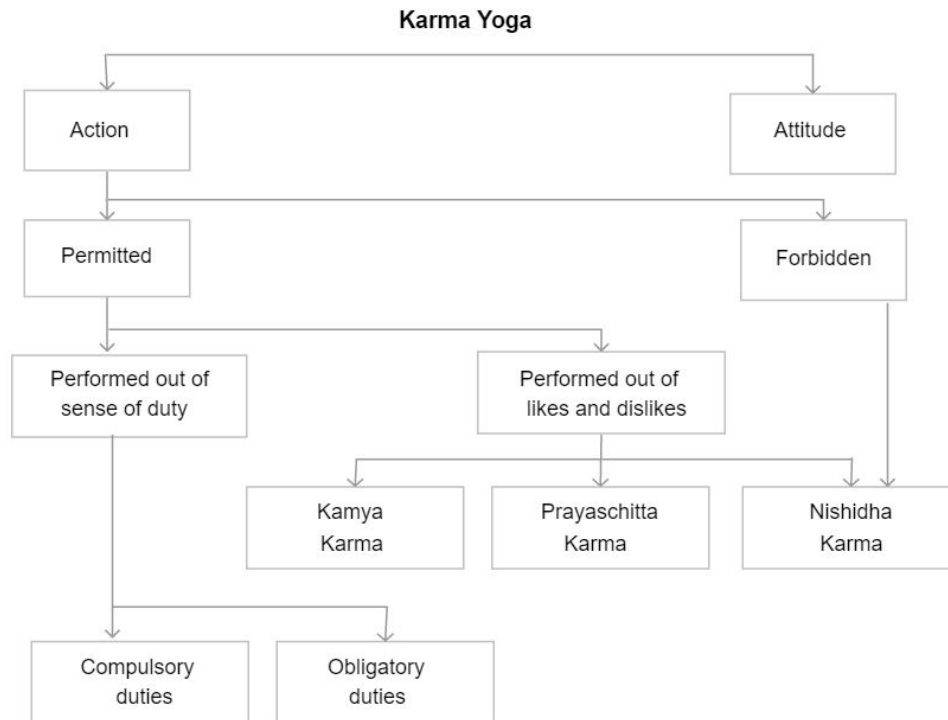
1. Compulsory duties (*Nithya Karma*)
2. Obligatory duties (*Naimittika Karma*)

### **Compulsory duties (*Nithya Karma*)**

These are regular or daily activities, like bathing, meditating, etc. It includes any regular or periodic scheduled activities or duties. *Nithya karma* is performed to establish a routine and keep the mind and body disciplined.

### **Obligatory duties (*Naimittika Karma*)**

These are duties that should be performed on special occasions like births, deaths, religious observations like fasting, festivals, birthdays, death anniversaries, etc. The scriptures detail how and when to perform these duties.



### Attitude

*Karma* creates bondage. The attitude behind an action creates merits or demerits. According to the scriptures, even merits are bondage. Merits will provide one with a comfortable body and circumstances in rebirths but will still keep him in *samsara* (the cycle of death and rebirth). Merits are, therefore, demerits too.

The only way to perform an action and not be bound by it is to perform the action according to *karma yoga*. Most people perform their duties only for the results. Performing one's duty is seen as a step towards achieving a particular result, but according to *karma yoga* performing the duty itself is the goal. There is nothing beyond that to achieve.

When we perform our duties, it will benefit someone else, but we should not expect right over the beneficiary. The beneficiary will also have duties performing which will benefit some others. This cycle should not be broken even if there is no direct benefit for one.

Everyone receives the results of their deeds which should be gracefully accepted — the graceful acceptance results in an equipoised mind in both desirable and undesirable situations. The equipoise mind stabilizes in a serenity that is ready for knowledge.

#### The three conditions to perform one's duty:

1. Do it for God.
2. Do it well.
3. Do it without attachment to the duty or the results.

## Verse 8

Lord Krishna said,

***Perform your obligatory duties, for action is better than inaction. Even maintaining your body is not possible through inaction. 3.8***

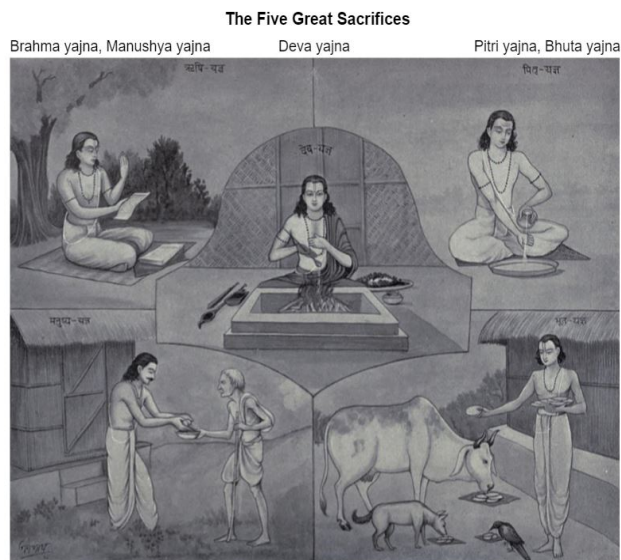
Lord Krishna asks Arjuna to perform the ordained duties.

### Ordained duties (**Niyata Karma**)

*Niyata karma* means prescribed or ordained actions that are to be performed as a sacrifice.

### The five great sacrifices (**Panchamaha yajna**)

1. Homage to God (*Deva yajna*)
2. Homage to ancestors (*Pitri yajna*)
3. Homage to *Brahman* or the scriptures that contain the knowledge of It (*Brahma yajna*)
4. Homage to humans (*Manushya yajna*)
5. Homage to beings (*Bhuta yajna*)



*Yajna* means sacrifices. These sacrifices are to be performed by every householder every day. The performance of these five sacrifices is conducive to one's spiritual evolution.

#### Homage to God

*Deva yajna* is cultivating devotion by realizing that all creations are the manifestation of God and recognizing God in nature and the laws governing them. It is a way of expressing one's gratitude towards God. Worship of God can be in any form like chanting, meditation,

ritualistic worship or anything else.

#### Benefits

- Prayers give one tranquillity of the mind.
- Prayers give one the strength to accept failures.
- Prayers build faith in the scriptures and the teachers, which helps one attain knowledge sooner.

#### Homage to ancestors

Performing prescribed rituals to honour one's ancestors for their contribution to evolution is *pitri yajna*. These are done as a duty towards them for having created the lineage with culture and lifestyle.

#### Benefits

- Homage to ancestors gives one an example of the life the ancestors have led and the hardships they overcame to achieve spiritual progress. This guides one to lead a similar life.

#### Homage to *Brahman*

Learning and protecting the scriptures that contain Cosmic knowledge is the duty of all humans. This must be performed to preserve the knowledge. The Bhagavad Gita has been preserved this way for thousands of years. The Vedas and many other scriptures have been transferred generation after generation by hearing and reciting them. The teachings have been passed down through the teachers to the students systematically which has kept them alive.

#### Benefits

- Cosmic knowledge is available to us today because of this homage. Learning and passing it will benefit future generations.



### Homage to humans

This is an obligation of every human being towards other human beings. Kind acts like taking care of the poor, and hungry and providing them clothing and shelter is an obligation for all. For example: offering food to the wandering monks. Any kind of help provided to another human is a service. This can also include sharing knowledge with others or even comforting one in distress. In such services, we should only be grateful to the people who let us serve them. We must not expect a return from them or right over them.

#### Benefits

- Homage to humans builds the attitude of giving without expecting returns.

### Homage to beings

Homage to other beings is to protect and help animals, plants, and nature.

#### Benefits

- Homage to other beings builds oneness and compassion with nature and cultivates cosmic love.

When all these sacrifices are performed daily, one will evolve spiritually sooner.

### The Five Great Sacrifices

Homage to God	Dedicate time for worship. Express gratitude towards God.
Homage to ancestors	Perform rituals to honor the ancestors.
Homage to Brahman	Learn and protect the scriptures that contain the Cosmic knowledge.
Homage to humans	Take care of other humans. Feed the hungry, poor and provide clothing, shelter.
Homage to other beings	Protect and help animals, plants and nature.

### A poor man

A poor man lived with his wife, son and daughter-in-law. There was a famine, and the whole family had been starving for long. One day the old man brought some food home. When they were about to eat, there was a visitor. The poor man welcomed the visitor and served him his portion of the food. Having eaten what was served, the visitor said, *thank you for your generosity, but my hunger is still not satisfied. I have been starving for weeks.* The poor man's wife then offered her portion of the food, yet he was still hungry. The son also offered his food, following which his wife also did. Having eaten all their food, the visitor left the house satisfied. But out of starvation, all of them died that night.

This story from the Vedas depicts what sacrifice is. It is giving others what you need yourself the most. The act of selfless offering is a vital attribute of a *karma yogi*.

## Verse 9

Lord Krishna said,

*All actions, other than the ones performed as selfless sacrifice, create bondage. Therefore, give up attachment and perform your work as a*



*sacrifice. 3.9*

### **Dharma protects its protectors**

*Dharmo rakshati rakshitah.* *Dharma* means righteousness, *rakshati* means protector, *rakshitah* means protects. Humans have the capability to perform sacrifices and live according to *karma yoga*. However, one can choose whether or not to live according to it. If one chooses to live according to *karma yoga* and perform the sacrifices, the *dharma* (righteousness) he protects will protect him. The fruits of all the sacrifices he performs unattached will result as merits for him. This will aid in manifesting his desires in his life and also pave the way to knowledge.

Lord Krishna metaphorically conveys this message by stating that performing these rituals of sacrifices cherishes the *devas* (divine beings, usually a representation of a certain force of nature), who in turn cherish the performer by fulfilling his worldly desires and helping him gain Cosmic knowledge. He says by honouring and protecting the law that governs the nature, the protector is protected by the law. This is *dharma*.

He further explains how one's attitude should be in experiencing the worldly pleasures he receives.

### **Attitude while receiving the results of the sacrifices performed**

Anyone experiencing the results of his sacrifices should experience them with the mindset mentioned below:

1. Receive it as God's grace.
2. Share it with others.

### **Receive it as God's grace**

The attitude of receiving anything as God's grace is called *prasada buddhi*. Any result of *kamya karma* (work done for pleasure) should also be received as God's grace. One must offer all that he receives to God and enjoy it as God's grace. This is because we do not see the limitations or find faults with God's grace. The results of the actions should also be accepted the same way, without finding faults or seeing its limitations.

### **Share it with others**

One must share the fruits with others before he enjoys them. Metaphorically it is said here that one must eat the remnants of the sacrifice, and the ones who cook only for themselves eat sin. It emphasizes that anyone who performs anything with selfish motives will not flourish.

## **Verses 10 – 13**

Lord Krishna said,

*Lord Brahma, the creator of the world, having created mankind along with the *yajna* in the beginning, said, take shelter in the principles of sacrifice, prosper and flourish. Let these sacrifices bestow upon you the things you desire. 3.10*

*Cherish the *devas* with these sacrifices, and in turn, they will cherish you. Therefore, through mutual nourishment, prosperity will reign for all. 3.11*

*Propitiated by sacrifices, the *devas* will bestow upon you all your desires. But he who enjoys the benefactions without offering them in return to the *devas* is certainly a thief. 3.12*

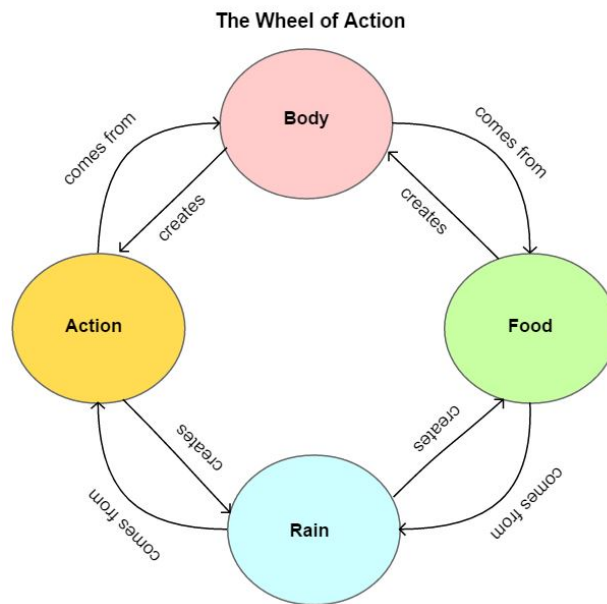
*Saints who eat the remnants of the sacrifice are freed from all sins, but those who cook food only for themselves, partake only of sin. 3.13*

### The wheel of action

It is apparent that the body is nourished by food and the actions that arise from the body are dependent on the food. It is also apparent that the food is dependent on the rain.

Lord Krishna says the rain is dependent on *dharmā* (the righteousness), which is not apparent and can only be accepted based on the faith in the teacher (*shraddha*). He says the rain is due to *apurva*. *Apurva* is something which was born after the performance of the sacrifices and was non-existent before it. It is not the action itself but the supersensuous result of an action which later on produces the expected results. *Apurva* comes from the actions (*karma*), and the actions come from the body.

Therefore, from our body, the action arises; from actions the merits; from merits the rain; from rain the food and from the food our body. This is a cycle, and for this cycle to survive, everyone has to perform *karma yoga* with the sacrifices. If an individual does not contribute to society, the society cannot function; if the society does not function, there is unrest, and the individual cannot function. This is a vicious cycle. *Karma yoga* is the virtue that keeps the society and its people functioning.



## Verse 14

Lord Krishna said,

*From food come all beings; from rain comes the food; from sacrifice comes the rain, and from action comes the sacrifice. 3.14*

The actions always come from one's body. The Vedas dictate which actions are correct and which are not.

### The origin of the Vedas

The Vedas are said to be *apaurusheya*. *Apaurusheya* means not from the humans.

The Vedas have been said to have come from the Supreme Creator Himself (Brahma) at the beginning of creation. Anything created by the human mind can have the below flaws:

1. Subject to illusion.
2. Careless mistakes.
3. Defects due to imperfect perception (senses).
4. Cheating.

**Subject to illusion:** Humans are subject to illusion. Some may not know what they believe is wrong and may guide others to it. This is a limitation of the ideas that come from humans.

**Careless mistakes:** Carelessness or human error are common human flaws.

**Defects due to imperfect perception:** When one's sensory perception is flawed by defects in his senses, his intellect, which depends on them, will also be flawed. Therefore, his direction for others will also be flawed.

**Cheating:** Humans can deliberately guide someone wrong with the intention of cheating to obtain personal benefits.

### **Vedas are flawless**

The Vedas, which were not created by humans, do not have any of these flaws.

He who lives in unison with the wheel of action prescribed in the Vedas contributes to the harmony of life. But the one who does not follow the wheel does not live in accordance with *karma yoga* and *dharma*. If one is not leading a virtuous life, he is then leading a non-virtuous life which will not lead him to liberation.

A life led only to gratify senses is a waste of human birth. Human birth is rare and is a gift. The Gita insists that everyone perform *karma yoga*, lead a virtuous life, and evolve.

## **Verses 15 – 16**

Lord Krishna said,

*Actions are prescribed in the Vedas, and the Vedas are manifested by the Supreme Creator. Therefore, the Supreme Creator, who is all-pervading, is inherently and inseparably present in the act of the sacrifices.* 3.15

*The one who does not follow the wheel thus set in motion based on the Vedas and instead leads a life for the contentment of his senses lives in vain.* 3.16

Having talked about *karma yoga* in detail, Lord Krishna tells Arjuna when one can leave his duties.

Lord Krishna describes the state of mind of a *jivanmukta* (the one who has attained liberation while still alive) as a reference to what one will achieve from *jnana yoga*. He entices Arjuna to pursue the path of action (*karma yoga*) to attain purity of mind so he can soon be qualified for knowledge (*jnana yoga*).



## Part III

# The Wise

### The mind of the liberated

**Happy in himself:** Ownership of an object of desire brings one great pleasure. When one knows that the object of his desire is at his disposal, ready to be experienced by him anytime gives him great comfort and joy. For the liberated, this pleasure is obtained by the ownership of himself, and he does not need an external object to experience this pleasure.

**Satisfied with himself:** Everybody is born into different circumstances like different families, health conditions, wealth, etc. The liberated is happy under any circumstances. He accepts any situation as they are and does not see the limitations of them. The wise does not reject himself when he is sick or because he does not like his body. There is immense self-love.

When one is happy with himself, has immense self-love and accepts any situation, then he does not have any more duties. He is experiencing the results of *yoga*. In this state of mind, he will himself disconnect from all the duties.

### The fruit of actions is inaction

When one reaches the above-stated state of mind, the scriptures free him from all his duties and grant him full freedom. There are no responsibilities or guidelines for this sage. For the liberated, there is no use performing any action, nor is there any consequence to performing actions. He just allows the *prarabdha* to manifest through his body and does not resist it.

Lord Krishna, having detailed the mind of the liberated, insists Arjuna perform his duties. He further shows examples of liberated people who still performed their duties. He teaches another important concept called *lokasamgraha* (the welfare of the world).

### The enlightenment and their duties

Janaka was an ancient Indian ruler of Videha empire (also called Mithila, located in the northern Indian region). He attained liberation while he was still king. This means he attained liberation by being in the *grihastha ashram* (being a householder) without leaving his duties and moving to the *sannyasa ashram* (asceticism). He performed his duties, purified his mind and even while being a king, he underwent learning and established with his knowledge.

We have seen that with the help of the two lifestyles and the completion of the two *yogas*, one can attain liberation. However, lifestyles (*ashrams*) aren't an absolute must. Janaka and others like him are examples of people who are no longer required to perform actions but continue nevertheless to engage in work in order to set an example to society. Some people have the *prarabdha* to continue to do good and set examples.

Arjuna, who is also a warrior like Janaka, is shown an example so that he performs his duties to protect righteousness.

### The welfare of the world (*Lokasamgraha*)

All human goals can be classified into the following:

1. *Shreyas* (Greatness)
2. *Preyas* (Desired)

***Shreyas* (Greatness):** *Shreyas* means choosing the ultimate good, even though there may be no instant gratification. *Shreyas* is pursuing greater goals like striving for liberation, even though it is very hard and unrewarding, to begin with.

***Preyas* (Desired):** *Preyas* is the path of action for pleasure and instant gratification but may not be good for the long run. Though it is very appealing, the rewards are short-lived. *Preyas* is taking the worldly path with the aim of attaining wealth (*artha*) and indulging in desires (*kama*).

### **Dharma, the fundamental of both paths**

Irrespective of the goals, *dharmā* (righteousness) is common for both. It may seem apparent that virtues are important to lead one to liberation, but they are also important for the path of *preyas*.

### **Why is righteousness necessary for the path of desire?**

To experience comfort and pleasure, merits are required. To be in a desirable situation, have a good and healthy body, and to be able to experience all pleasures, merits have to be accumulated. The result of leading a virtuous life gives one merit. If one chooses the non-virtuous path, he will collect demerits which will manifest later as undesirable situations.

By leading a virtuous life, if one seeks pleasure, it will manifest as material comfort; instead, if one seeks purity of mind, it will manifest as liberation. Righteousness is the foundation for either way of life. It is necessary for manifesting any human goal.

### **How can one decide what righteousness is?**

*Dharma* (righteousness) should not be determined based on one's likes and dislikes. The three instruments that decide what *dharmā* is according to *Dharma*sutra (guidebooks of *dharmā*) are:

1. The Vedas
2. The *Smritis*
3. *Shishtacharas* (the righteous role model)

***The source of dharmā is the Veda, as well as the tradition (smṛiti), and practice of those who know the Veda.***

**- Gautama Dharmasutra 1.1-1.2**

### **The Vedas**

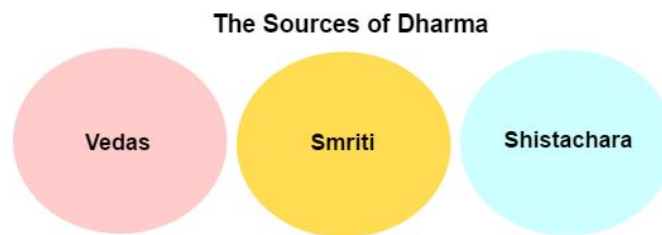
The Vedas are religious texts composed in Sanskrit, originating in ancient India. They were one of the oldest Sanskrit literatures and the oldest scriptures of Hinduism. It is believed that the Vedas came from the Creator Himself. The Vedas contain spiritual knowledge encompassing all aspects of life. The four Vedas are Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda, and Atharva Veda. Each Veda consists of four parts, the hymns, the rituals, the theologies, and the philosophies. The Vedas are considered the root of *dharmā*.

### **Smṛiti**

*Smṛiti* means that which is remembered, is also a body of Hindu texts. These texts were authored by saints who were well versed in the Vedas and based them on the Vedas. The *smṛiti* literature consists of the epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana, guidebooks like Dharmasutras, Manusmṛiti and many more.

*Dharma* was described in the form of stories in the *smṛiti* literary work. *Smṛiti* can change over time and can be written in relevance to that time period. Each *smṛiti* text exists in many versions. They have been rewritten by many

scholars throughout history.



### **Shishtachara (The righteous role model)**

*Shishtacharas* are the great ones who, having learned the Vedas, the *smritis* live in accordance with *dharma*. They are living examples for the people around them. People look up to them, learn from them and follow them.

#### **Importance of *shishtachara***

One cannot understand *dharma* just by hearing or reading about it. One learns from seeing examples. Just like a baby learns from watching its parents, so does society learn from watching its leaders. The kings and the leaders of society are followed by many, and therefore, it is their responsibility to live righteously and lead their people in accordance with *dharma*.

Janaka, after enlightenment, severed his kingdom for this reason. Arjuna, who is also a warrior, should set the right example by fighting the righteous war. He is watched by his people in the hope of bringing righteousness back to his kingdom. If he refuses to fight, people will lose track of righteousness and will destroy themselves and the kingdom.

Having spoken about the importance of *shishtachara* Lord Krishna shows Arjuna the ultimate example. It is Lord Krishna Himself. He tells Arjuna that although He has transcended all His duties, He acts according to the scriptural injunctions to set an example to others. He says if He remains inactive, the people will imitate Him by being in inertia. Without the right action, the wheel of action will be disrupted and will lead to the destruction of oneself and the world. The entire universe is sustained by action.

Lord Krishna says the ignorant must perform his duties to attain purity of mind and the wise for the welfare of the world if that is his *prarabdha*.

## **Verses 17 – 24**

Lord Krishna said,

*For the one who rejoices only in the Self, satisfied in the Self and content in the Self alone, for him, there is no duty.* 3.17

*For him, who is Self-realized, there is no gain from his actions, nor is there any loss from his inaction. There is no being he is dependent on either.* 3.18

*Therefore, perform your prescribed duties without attachment, for by performing action without attachment, one attains the Supreme.* 3.19

*Janaka and others attained perfection solely by performing their prescribed duties. So, perform your duty for the sake of guiding your people.* 3.20



*Whatever action a great man performs, the masses follow. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, the world adheres to.* 3.21

*There is nothing in the three worlds that has to be done by Me, there is nothing I have to attain or anything I lack, yet I continue to engage myself in work.* 3.22

*For if I ever not engage in action continuously, then all men who follow My path will give up their duties.* 3.23

*If I do not continue to perform actions, the world will annihilate. I would be the cause of confusion and the instrument for ruination.* 3.24

Detailing the benefits of performing the right actions and the drawbacks of non-performing them, Lord Krishna has some advice for the wise. He describes how the wise should interact with different kinds of people to help them reach the higher.

### **How should the wise guide others?**

The wise must guide one only when asked for based on how receptive he is and how much knowledge he qualifies for. Upanishads broadly classify all people into four types based on the kind of knowledge that would bring them benefit. The wise should follow these guidelines while interacting with people.

#### **The four kinds of people**

1. The lowly people (*Pamara*)
2. The worldly people (*Vishayi*)
3. The one yearning for liberation (*Mumukshu*)
4. The liberated (*Mukata*)

**The lowly people:** These are people who do not engage in activity and are taken over by *tamas guna* (dullness). They are generally not inclined to perform their duties. Some are even inclined towards performing prohibited actions. The wise must not teach them, for they are not ready yet. There will be no use discoursing the Cosmic knowledge to them.

**The worldly people:** The worldly people are the ones who have strong desires to earn riches and indulge in worldly pleasures. They are predominantly of *rajas guna* (passion). The wise can discuss rituals in the Vedas that are meant to bring good fortune but must not discuss renunciation or discourse the Cosmic knowledge to them. They will not be able to renounce and are not ready for the knowledge. Renunciation is not an act; it is an attitude that develops. Therefore, they must be left in their indulgence, for at least, they are in action, which is better than no action. The wise can teach them righteousness and to obtain and enjoy wealth righteously.

**The one yearning for liberation:** A *mumukshu* is the one who yearns for liberation. He must have already developed renunciation. The wise should share the Cosmic knowledge and strengthen his dispassion.

**The liberated:** The liberated does not need any guidance.

## **Verses 25 – 26**

Lord Krishna said,

*As an ignorant person performs action because of attachment, so should the wise perform actions without attachment purely for the welfare of the world.* 3.25



*The wise should under no circumstances disturb the mind of the ignorant who are attached to their actions. Instead, he should keep them engaged in action by the wise himself performing actions with devotion.*

3.26

Having detailed how the wise must guide people, Lord Krishna explains the difference between the actions of the wise and the actions of the ignorant. To understand this, we will look into the concepts of *maya*, *gunas* and manifestations.

### Maya

*Maya* means illusion, an important concept in Hinduism. According to *yogic* philosophy, the entire universe is divided into *Prakriti* (*maya*) and *Purusha*. *Prakriti* means primal creative energy or primal matter with the three *gunas*: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. *Purusha* means the Cosmic Self, Cosmic Consciousness. *Purusha* is discussed in several Upanishads and has been referred to interchangeably as *Brahman*. To simplify, *Prakriti* can be understood as matter and *Purusha* as the spirit.

*This Purusha is all that yet hath been and all that is to be*  
-Rig Veda

### Creation

*Maya*, with the influence of *Purusha*, is the cause for the creation of the entire universe. *Maya* consists of the three *gunas* in equilibrium. By the influence of *Purusha*, a disequilibrium is caused among the *gunas*. The change in the equilibrium of the *gunas* invariably results in creation. For this reason, *Prakriti* is considered the female energy and *Purusha* the male energy.

Anything that is created out of *maya* has its inherent component, the three *gunas*. The world is from *maya* is made of its three *gunas*. Our body and mind, which exists within this world, are made up of the three *gunas*. The world and our bodies are both creations of *maya*.



### The story of Narada and *maya*

Once Narada (a great sage from the abode of the Gods descended to earth) was walking with Lord Krishna near a village. Narada asked Lord Krishna, *Dear Lord, please show me the power of *maya**. Without replying, out of thirst, Lord Krishna said to Narada, *bring me some water*. Narada found a hut and knocked at the door to get water. A beautiful woman opened the door, and Narada was instantly captivated by her charm. Soon they married and had three children. After several days of monsoon, a river near their house flooded. They had to leave their houses in search of safety. With two children on his shoulder, his wife and the other child following him, Narada walked in flood to reach a safer place. The flood got very strong and pulled away his children and his wife. Desolated, Narada began to lament his loss. Lord Krishna then appeared and asked, *where is the water?* It instantly dawned upon him that it was indeed Lord Krishna's display of *maya*. Lord Krishna said **maya* made you forget who you are and what you came for. This is the power of *maya**.

### Ardhanarishvara



This concept of *Prakriti* and *Purusha* has been represented in Hinduism with the help of *Ardhanarishvara*. *Ardhanarishvara* is a combination of three words *ardha* which means half, *nari*, which means woman and *Ishvara* meaning Lord. *Ardhanarishvara*, therefore, means "the Lord Who is half woman", is an androgynous Hindu deity which represents *Prakriti* and *Purusha*. Goddess Parvati (*Shakti*) represents *Prakriti*, and God Shiva represents *Purusha*. *Ardhanarishvara* is the representation of the unity of opposites in the universe, the totality that is beyond duality. It represents God as both Shiva and Parvati, both male and female, both strong and gentle, both constructive and destructive.

***The world is made of Shiva and Shakti.***  
**-Kularnava Tantra**

### The ignorant and the actions

The ignorant splits (*maya*) into two — the world and himself. Being a part of the world, he perceives his body as the experiencer and the world as an object of experience. He identifies himself with the ego "I" of his subtle body and believes he is the body. He thinks he is the doer and the reaper of all the actions that are performed by his *gunas*, and so his actions bind him.

### The wise and the actions

The wise know that all manifestations are the work of *maya*. His consciousness is in the Soul and not in the body. He perceives his own body as an external object. He knows he is the witness of these two manifested illusions. He dissociates himself from the *gunas* and their actions. He identifies his actions are from his

body and not from him — the Soul. Therefore, his actions do not bind him.

### **Attachment to *maya***

The body made of the *gunas* is attached to the world, which is also made of the *gunas*. One whose consciousness is in the body is attached to the world and its pleasures. He works for material pleasure to enjoy worldly pleasures.

The wise should not draw the ignorant into renunciation, for he is not ready for it. Even the ignorant will evolve eventually by performing actions. By teaching him when he is not ready, the wise might lead the ignorant to discard work which will lead him to slip into *tamas guna*. That is detrimental to his spiritual progress, for only through *rajas guna* can one reach *sattva* and not directly from *tamas*. Action is *rajas guna*. One, even if ignorant but caught up in the material world, is at least in action, at least in *rajas guna*.

The wise can only talk about righteousness and advise the ignorant to pursue the virtuous path in obtaining material pleasures. By this, he will not further slip into the unrighteousness which will hinder his spiritual progress. Therefore, the ignorant should be kept in action.

## **Verses 27 – 29**

Lord Krishna said,

*All actions are being performed by the three *gunas* of *Prakriti*. The one whose mind is deluded by egoism thinks he is the doer.* 3.27

*The wise know that his *gunas* are performing the action to engage with the *gunas* of the objects around them. He does not get attached to them.* 3.28

*The wise with the perfect knowledge should not disturb the mind of the ignorant, who, deluded by the *gunas*, are attached to them.* 3.29

Having talked about *karma yoga*, Lord Krishna consolidates and conveys the central idea of *karma yoga*.

### **Why should one perform *karma yoga*?**

*Karma yoga* is required to keep the cosmic wheel in motion, which keeps the world functioning. If liberation is the aim of a person, he should perform *karma yoga* to obtain purity of mind, which is necessary to obtain and retain knowledge. For the one who is already liberated, he should perform *karma yoga* for the welfare of the world if his *prarabdha* dictates.

### ***Karma yoga* guidelines**

- Perform *karma yoga* with the complete knowledge of the Self. Understand that the action itself does not lead to bondage, but the attitude behind it does. Perform actions for the fulfilment of the duty and not for the outcome.
- Perform actions as an offering to God and accept the outcome as God's grace. Anything offered to God is not done halfhearted or left incomplete, so perform all the work for God. Also, anything received as God's grace is received with gratitude and complete acceptance without looking at its limitations.
- Perform your duty but do not expect right over them.
- Work without ego, without the "I-ness" in it and without the thought "I am the doer".
- Maintain equipoise on the outcome of the actions.

## Verses 30 – 32

Lord Krishna said,

***Surrender all actions to Me, with the mind on the Self, without desire, longing or claims of proprietorship, free yourself from lethargy and fight.*** 3.30

*Bhagavan* Krishna says that *karma yoga* was given by Him to all mankind. All humans should follow this path with full faith and live according to *karma yoga*. The ones who do not follow the righteous path will then, by default, be following the unrighteous path. By being unrighteous, one will incur sins. Sins manifest as ignorance. Ignorance clouds one's mind, and the ignorant will not have the right aim in life. He will be caught up in the worldly web of *maya*, remaining anchored in the same place without any spiritual progress even if he progresses well in the material world.

Lord Krishna said,

***Those who ceaselessly practice this teaching of Mine with faith and without finding faults will be freed from all bondage of their actions.*** 3.31

***But those who denounce My teachings and do not live according to it, deluded in regard to the true knowledge and devoid of discrimination, will be doomed.*** 3.32

Though everyone knows the merits of taking the path of *karma yoga*, not all follow. Lord Krishna explains what drives one's actions.



## Part IV

# Innate Nature

### Innate nature (**svabhava**)

*Svabhava* means one's disposition. It is one's innate nature, also called one's *Prakriti*. Everyone runs their life according to their *svabhava*.

### What determines one's innate nature?

**Vasanas:** *Vasanas* are tendencies that influence a person's present behaviour formed by all his *samskaras*.

**Samskara:** *Samskaras* are the mental imprints caused by all thoughts, actions, and intentions a person has ever experienced. *Samskaras* are constantly being created by our everyday experiences with objects. For example, when we try new food, it creates certain imprints in the form of likes or dislikes. We may not remember the taste of the food, but we choose the food based on whether or not we liked it. If we like the food, we build a craving for it and would like to experience it again and again. If we do not like it, by experiencing it again, we build an aversion towards that food. This is how *samskaras* are created.

They are not the memory itself but the imprints of the experience. With similar experiences over and over, they get stronger, and the affinity or aversion towards the objects or experiences gets stronger.

The tendency to choose the objects or experiences of our desires based on *samskara* is *vasana*. The tendency to experience something over and over as it gives one pleasure is an attribute of *vasana*. Similarly, avoiding an experience due to fear or displeasure caused by an experience is also an attribute of *vasana*.

All living beings have *samskaras* in their minds from previous lives in their subtle bodies. One is attracted or repelled by objects because of these imprints. Though we interact with a lot of objects (or people) every day, we have an affinity for only a few.

*Vasanas* lie dormant in the mind and do not surface until it finds a suitable situation.

Different people have different *samskaras* and, therefore, have different likes and dislikes. Everyone leads their life based on the *samskara*, even the wise.

### The wise also lead their life according to their *samskaras*

Even the one who knows right from wrong lives his life according to his innate nature. Lord Krishna says even the wise lead their life based on their innate nature, expect, they block what is not righteous.

### Change no one

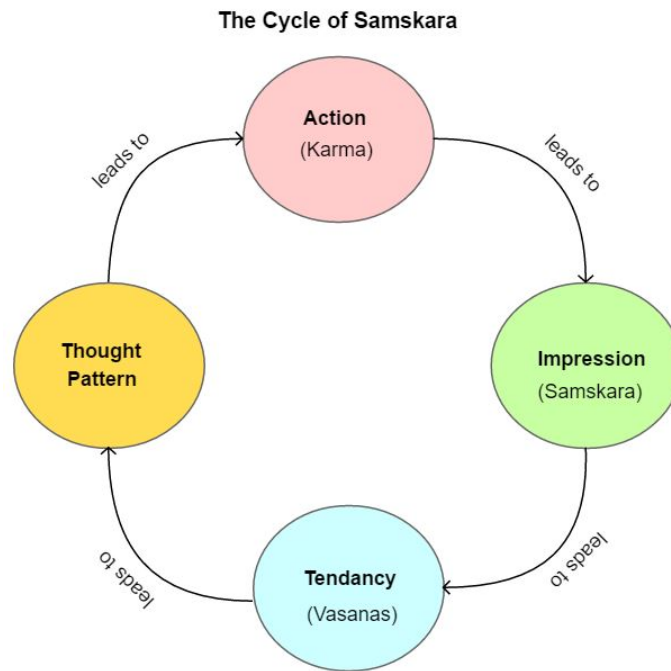
Everyone lives according to their imprints, and so it is not possible to change anyone. Therefore, we should not try to change others. When suppressed by external forces, the inherent nature of one will remain subdued only so long until it finds the right situation to unfold.

### Creating better *samskara*

*Samskara* creates likes and dislikes in one's mind. However, whether or not we act on it is in our own hands. One's tendencies cannot take action without one's intellect approving it and thereby making efforts towards it.

The scriptures lead us to the righteous path. With this knowledge, one can choose to act only on righteous tendencies. This will lower one's bad imprints and form better imprints over time.

We cannot change other's deep-rooted tendencies created over several lifetimes. Everyone has to work on their own imprints to change it to a more righteous one. This is a cycle. Actions lead to imprints. Imprints lead to tendencies, tendencies lead to thought patterns, and thought patterns lead to actions.



## Verses 33 – 34

Lord Krishna said,

***Even the wise act according to their nature; all beings act according to their nature; what can suppression accomplish?*** 3.33

***Attraction and aversion are experienced by the senses when in contact with the sense objects. It is inevitable. But one should not let them control him, for they are his greatest enemy.*** 3.34

The innate nature of a person has been formed by thoughts and actions over several lifetimes, and it takes many lifetimes of practice to change them. For this reason, Lord Krishna refrains Arjuna from shunning his *vasanas* of being a warrior to take up an ascetic lifestyle, though the ascetic lifestyle is nobler. He says one must do one's duty based on one's *vasanas* until he changes his *vasanas* to a nobler one.

### The two kinds of duties

1. *Svadharmā*: *Sva* means self. *Svadharmā* means the duty of self. *Svadharmā* is ideally taken up by a person based on his inclinations, and so it is considered best suited for him.
2. *Paradharmā*: *Para* means others. *Paradharmā* means the duty of the others.



Doing one's own duty, which is based on one's nature and tendencies, will bring one a long-lasting satisfaction than performing an even nobler duty which is not his. *Paradharma*, although is not forbidden in the scripture, is also not *karma yoga*. Though even the other's duties are based on righteousness, for one to skip his duty and take up another's is not correct.

One's duty should be chosen based on one's inclinations. The *samskaras* will come up even when one tries to change himself to do other's duty.

Arjuna desisting the war and preferring an ascetic life is just a momentary thought. His *vasanas* will not allow him to shun his interests in weapons and war. Arjuna will not be able to give up his inclination towards protecting his people and taking up an ascetic life as he wants now. His nature which is full of passion, will not let him progress in an ascetic lifestyle. It is important to act according to one's *vasanas*. Even if he does it imperfectly, it is the right path for one's development. It is not sustainable to suppress one's nature and imitate the nature of others, even if they are divine. Performing others' duties induces fear. He will neither be qualified nor will have the qualities to perform well in it. With fear, one cannot progress in the job.

## Verse 35

Lord Krishna said,

*It is far better to perform one's own duties even imperfectly than to perform another's duties perfectly. It is better to die doing one's duty, for the duty of another is fraught with fear and danger. 3.35*





## Part V

# The Enemy

## Verse 36

It is apparent to Arjuna that everyone has their duties to fulfil, and they also know what is not their duty, yet some perform others' duties or do not perform their own. Even worse, some perform sinful acts knowing it is wrong. He wonders what pushes one to do these unsolicited acts. Arjuna said,

*Though no one wants to sin, why then does anyone sin as though compelled by some force? 3.36*

Lord Krishna says *it because of desire.*

### Desire (**Kama**)

*Kama* means desire. Desire is born out of *rajas guna* (passion).

*Man consists of desire (**kama**), and as is his desire, so is his will; and as is his will, so is his deed; and whatever deed he does, that he will reap.*

**-Brihadaranyak Upanishad.**

Our subtle body has both mind and intellect. Intellect is the decision-making part of the inner senses. The mind is the emotional part of the inner senses. Intellect based on the collected knowledge, understands, analyzes, discriminates and then decides. The inherent nature of intellect is to differentiate between right and wrong. The intellect will not mix up the two by itself. The mind, however, chooses based on comfort.

The Vedas use a horse chariot as an analogy to explain the relationship between the mind, intellect and body. The body is compared to the chariot, the intellect to a charioteer and the mind (the senses) to the horses. The charioteer should control the horses for the chariot to reach its destination. However, the horses have their own attraction and aversion based on which they will go. Like the horses must be controlled and tamed by the charioteer, the mind has to be tamed by the intellect. An uncontrolled mind driven by worldly pleasures, much like the wild horses, will not reach the goal.

No one wants to sin according to their intellect. But the mind has its attraction and aversion. Both the mind and intellect have to agree to perform any action. If the mind wants something and if the intellect does not allow for it, then there is a conflict between the intellect and the mind. If the mind is taken over by desire, it will convince the intellect to make a choice based on the desire, which the intellect will eventually submit to. The deluded intellect will then make decisions to suit the desire instead of what is correct. Desire deludes the intellect.

### Characteristics of desire

According to Gita, desire has three characteristics:

1. Desire manifests as anger.
2. Desire is insatiable.
3. Desire leads to sin.

**Desire manifests as anger:** The root cause of anger is desire. The desire that is unfulfilled or hindered leads to anger. When there is no desire, there is no anger.

**Desire is insatiable:** Desire does not vanish when the object of desire is achieved. It only leads to another desire for another object. Trying to fulfil the desires with the objects of desire is like adding fuel to the fire. Attending to the desire only leads to more desires. It is said that *all that earth can offer will still not be enough for one person.*

**Desire leads to sin:** Desire deludes the intellect and leads one to sinful actions. When desire occupies the mind, the mind indulges in the object of desire. If the intellect does not allow for the mind to indulge in the desire, the mind will not follow the intellect. When the intellect and the mind constantly contradict, the mind fears and loses its freedom, and so it corrupts the intellect. When the intellect gets corrupt, one loses a sense of righteousness. He will no longer be able to distinguish between right and wrong.

Arjuna, who thinks the righteous war is wrong because of his attachment to his extended family, is an example of a deluded mind. His mind tricks him into thinking his duty is a sin to protect the people he is attached to. Desire hides knowledge and deludes the mind.

### **The Seventh Jar of Gold**

*(A Parable of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa)*

A barber of a king once told his wife, *I want to become very rich. I want you to be adorned with precious gems and gold. I will meet the king today and ask for a raise.* On his way to the palace, he rested under a tree. A voice from the tree told him to go home at once and find the seven jars of gold. To his surprise, there were seven jars when he went back home. Six of them were filled with gold coins, and the seventh jar was half empty. He quickly started to fill it out with all the gold his wife had, and yet it was still half empty. Filling the jar became his only focus in life. He cut down on food and other expenses to buy gold and fill the seventh jar. Even after all his efforts and irrespective of what he added to the jar, it was half empty. Soon it became apparent to the king that something was wrong with him, and he demanded to know. The barber told him the story. The king replied, *you fool! The seventh jar is the jar of desire. Nothing in this world can fill it.* The barber realized and went under the same tree and asked the voice to take the jars away. The jars disappeared, and he resumed his peaceful earlier life.

### **Desire hides knowledge**

The Gita states three examples to show how different types of desire hide knowledge. Desires are divided into three categories based on the attachments:

1. *Sattvic* desires
2. *Rajasic* desires
3. *Tamasic* desires

***Sattvic* desires:** *Sattvic* desires cover the wisdom as the smoke covers the fire. The smoke can be dispelled with a slight wind. Similarly, with a little effort, the cover on the wisdom can be removed.

***Rajasic* desires:** The *rajasic* desires dim the knowledge like the dust obscures a mirror. It requires more effort to remove the dust.

***Tamasic* desires:** The *tamasic* desires darken the knowledge like an embryo

covered in the womb. These desires hamper wisdom. They are deep-rooted and take a long time to remove them.

**The desire is the enemy**

The wise know that the insatiable desire that conceals wisdom and deludes the mind is his foe. He knows that it hinders his spiritual progress. The ignorant, however, enjoys all the desires his *samskaras* bring him to gratify his senses. Only after he experiences failure and pain because of them he recognizes that it is what is called the *preyas* (short-lived instant gratification).

**Where is the desire located?**

The people or the objects themselves do not have any power of attraction. If the objects had the power to attract, then anyone seeing or engaging with the object should desire them, but that is not the case.

Different people desire different things. Desires are based on one's *samskaras* (mental imprints). The senses perceive the objects of pleasure and transmit them to the mind. The stimulated mind deludes the intellect into thinking the object is required. Therefore, desires are not located within the objects but within one's subtle body. It is located in one's:

1. Senses
2. Mind
3. Intellect

## Verses 37 – 40

Lord Krishna said,

*It is the desire, another form of which is anger, that induces one to sin. Know that the insatiable and extremely malicious desire is the worst enemy of mankind.* 3.37

*As fire engulfed by smoke, as the mirror covered in dust, as an embryo enveloped by the womb, so does the desire cover wisdom.* 3.38

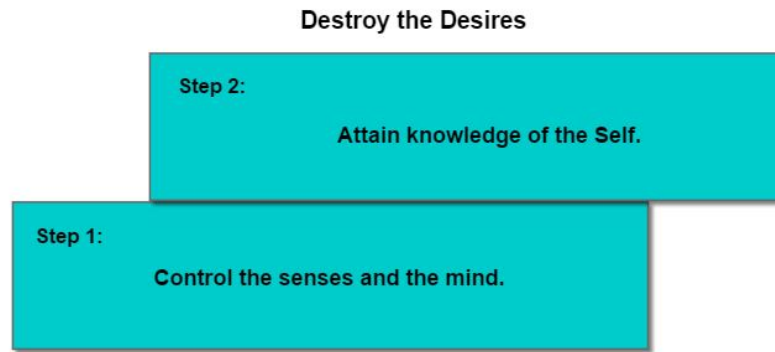
*Wisdom is hidden by desire, the constant enemy of the wise. It is unappeasable as the fire.* 3.39

*Desire dwells in the senses, mind, and intellect. It eclipses one's knowledge and bewilders him.* 3.40

Having talked about the enemy and its location, Lord Krishna details how to destroy it.

**The two steps for destroying desire**

1. Control of the senses and the mind (*dama*, *sama*).
2. Knowledge of the Self (*Atma jnana*).



### **Control of the senses and the mind (*dama, sama*)**

One gets attached to the objects he sees or constantly meditates on, even without the involvement of the objects. Do not entertain unnecessary desires or meditate on them.

The knowledge of what is right for spiritual progress is obtained from the scriptures. One should impose control of the senses and the mind on anything else.

### **Knowledge of the Self (*Atma jnana*)**

Controlling the senses and the mind will only lead to external abstinence. To refrain from the desire both externally and internally, one must understand the Self fully.

### **How does the knowledge of the Self destroy desires?**

Desires arise from the lack in one's mind. When one thinks he is the body, he takes up the characteristics of the body, which are flaws and lacking. The lack of understanding about the Self leads to this ignorance. Because of ignorance, one thinks he can fill up the lack in him with objects of his desire. Due to ignorance, one tries to feel a sense of contentment by filling it with objects of desire and other pleasures.

The absence of discrimination between *Atma* (Soul) and *anathma* (non - soul) is the reason for desire. The Soul is complete and blissful. When one identifies oneself with the Soul, he is complete and content. No desires arise in such a person.

Lord Krishna says we must move our consciousness from the body to the Soul. He says one must understand that the senses, which are subtler than the gross body, which is limited, are greater. The mind which governs the function of the senses is superior to the senses. The intellect which discriminates and dictates the mind is even superior. The Self that illuminates the intellect and stands as a witness is the most superior of them all.

One must surrender his ego from the body, then from the senses, and then from the intellect and identify himself as the Soul.

We must understand that we are not the body by the Soul. When one attains union with this knowledge and standstill on it, conquers his enemy.

## **Verses 41 – 43**

Lord Krishna said,

*First, control the senses, then kill the desire, which is the destroyer of knowledge and wisdom.* 3.41

*The subtle senses are superior to the dull body; the mind is superior to the senses; superior to the mind is the intellect, and the one even superior*

*to the intellect is the Self.* 3.42

*Thus by knowing the Self, which is far superior to the intellect and by disciplining the self by the Self, destroy the enemy in the form of desire, though hard to conquer.* 3.43



**Aum Tat Sat**

# Summary

## Part I - Arjuna's Question

- Arjuna asks Lord Krishna, if wisdom is superior to action, why He asks him to engage in this terrible action?
- Lord Krishna says that He has given a two-fold path to mankind, the path of knowledge for the wise and the path of selfless action for the men of action.
- *Pravritti marga* is to live amidst worldly duties, the path suggested for the householders. *Karma yoga* is *pravritti marga*.
- *Nivritti marga* is called the path of return, the path of spiritual contemplation. The path for the ascetic. *Jnana yoga* is *nivritti marga*
- Without the path of action, one cannot take the path of knowledge.
- Lifestyle alone does not lead one to liberation.
- Both *karma yoga* and *jnana yoga* should be perfected for liberation.
- Lord Krishna says inaction is not a solution. Inaction is not possible. Inaction leads to spiritual failure.

## Part II - Karma Yoga

- *Karma yoga* is about actions and attitude while performing one's duty.
- Actions are broadly classified into permitted actions and forbidden actions. One must not perform actions forbidden in the Vedas.
- One must reduce action for pleasure.
- Everybody must perform their duties. One must do it for God, do it well and do it without attachment.
- One must accept the outcome of the action as God's grace and share the benefits with others.
- We must perform sacrifices. The five great sacrifices that should be performed by every householder are: homage to God, homage to ancestors, homage to *Brahman*, homage to humans, homage to other beings.
- *Dharma* protects the protector.
- Performing sacrifices will lead to faster spiritual growth while being a householder.
- We must protect the wheel of action, for it is necessary for the existence of all.

## Part III – The Wise

- The ignorant should perform his duties for the purity of mind and the wise for the welfare of the world.
- *Dharma* is the fundamental of both paths: *shreyas* (greatness) and *preyas* (desired).
- The source of *dharma* is the Vedas, *smritis* and *shistacharas*.
- The Vedas are religious texts composed in Sanskrit, originating in ancient India. It is believed that the Vedas are from the Creator and are referred to as *apauruseya*, which means not of human origin, and, therefore, do not have human flaws.
- The *smriti* literature consists of the epics like Mahabharata, and Ramayana, guidebooks like *Dharmasutras*, Manusmriti and many more.
- *Shistacharas* are the great ones who have learned the Vedas and the *smritis* and live in accordance with *dharma*. They are living examples for people around them. People look up to them, learn from them and follow them.

- The four types of people described in the Upanishads are the lowly people, the worldly people, the one yearning for liberation, and the liberated.
- The wise should teach the worldly people about righteousness only and engage them in righteous action.
- The wise should strengthen the dispassion and teach the Cosmic knowledge to the one who is yearning for liberation.
- *Maya* means illusion. *Maya* consists of the three *gunas* in equilibrium.
- *Prakriti* (*maya*) means matter, and *Purusha* means the spirit.
- *Prakriti*, with the influence of *Purusha* (which causes a disequilibrium among the *gunas*), results in the manifestation of the entire universe.
- The world, which is made of *maya*, is made of its three *gunas*. Our body and mind, which exists within this world, is made up of the three *gunas*. The world and our body are both creations of *maya*.
- The ignorant splits (*maya*) into two. The world and himself. Being a part of the world, he perceives himself as the experiencer and the world as an object of experience. He identifies himself with the ego "I" of his subtle body and believes he is the body. He thinks he is the doer and the reaper of all actions that are performed by his *gunas*, and so his actions bind him.
- The wise knows that all manifestations are the work of *maya*. His consciousness is in the Soul and not in the body. The actions which do not arise from him does not bind him.
- Lord Krishna says we must perform *karma yoga* with the complete knowledge of the Self. We must understand that the action does not lead to bondage, but the attitude behind it does. We must perform actions for the fulfilment of the duty and not for the outcome.
- One must perform actions as an offering to God and accept the outcome as God's grace. Anything offered to God is not done halfhearted or left incomplete, so we must perform all work for God. Also, anything received as God's grace is received with gratitude and complete acceptance without looking at its limitations.
- We must perform our duties but must not expect right over them.
- One must work without ego, without the "I-ness" in it and without the thought "I am the doer".
- Maintain equipoise on the outcome of the actions.

#### Part- IV - Innate Nature

- *Svabhava* means one's disposition, one's innate nature. Everyone lives their life according to their *svabhava*
- *Vasanas* are the tendencies formed by all his *samskaras*.
- *Samskaras* are the mental impressions caused by all thoughts, actions, and intentions a person has ever experienced. *Samskaras* are constantly being created by our everyday experiences with objects.
- The wise also leads his life according to his *samskaras*.
- We must not try to change others, for all beings live their lives according to their innate nature. Trying to change others will not lead to any success. When suppressed by an external force, the inherent nature of one will remain subdued only so long until it finds the right situation to unfold.
- Innate nature can be changed only by oneself with effort. He has to learn discrimination between right and wrong actions and act on what is right. After many lifetimes of practice, righteousness becomes a part of his innate nature.



- One must perform only one's own duty. Doing others' duty, even if it is nobler, will only lead to fear and failure.

### **Part-V - The Enemy**

- Arjuna asks Lord Krishna, though no one wants to commit sin, why then does anyone commit sin as though compelled by some force?
- For which Lord Krishna says, it is because of desire.
- *Kama* means desire. Desire is born out of *rajas guna*.
- Desire is an enemy.
- Desire manifests as anger. It is insatiable and leads to sin.
- Desire deludes the intellect and hides knowledge.
- Desire is located in the senses, the mind and the intellect of a person.
- The two steps to destroy desire are by controlling the senses and the mind and by gaining knowledge of Self.

## Chapter 4

# Jnana Karma Sannyasa Yoga



chapter ends with Lord Krishna glorifying transcendental knowledge and asking Arjuna to attain it.

*Jnana Karma Sannyasa Yoga*: The *Yoga* of Renunciation of Action through Knowledge. In this chapter, *Bhagavan* Krishna explains the reason and nature of His descent. He reveals a secret about action and inaction, which even many learned do not have a correct understanding of. He details why the actions of the wise do not bind them and asks Arjuna to follow the path of the predecessor. He also explains several sacrifices and regards the sacrifice of knowledge as the highest of them all. Lord Krishna talks about *gurus* and the attitude one must hold to attain knowledge from a *guru*. This



## Part I

# Avatar

*Avatar* means descent. An *avatar* refers to the embodiment or manifestation of God. We can look at this concept from two angles:

1. The righteousness point of view (*Dharma dristi*) or
2. The *karmic* point of view (*Karma dristi*)

### The righteousness point of view (*Dharma dristi*)

The body is used as an analogy to explain this concept. For a body to exist, it has to have the power to protect itself. When the body is attacked, the body should defend itself from the destructive forces to survive. This power is referred to as immunity and is an innate nature of the body. When the body functions normally, this power is hidden within the body and comes to display only when the body is under threat.

Similarly, the entire cosmos is one body that functions because of *dharma* (righteousness). When righteousness is threatened, the defensive power that is hidden comes out and destroys the unrighteousness and restores the righteousness. This cosmic power/force is an *avatar*.

An *avatar* is a power that is hidden when the world functions according to *dharma* and appears when the flow is disrupted. The power/force then removes the reason for the destruction and restores harmony and disappears again.

An *avatar* does not necessarily have to have a human form. In fact, among the ten well-known *avatars* of Vishnu, popularly known as the *Dashavatara*, the first four were not in human forms. They were *matsya* - the fish, *kurma* - the tortoise, *varaha* - the boar, and *narasimha* - the half-man and half-lion. According to the scriptures, natural disasters (like earthquakes) are also considered *avatars*.

When the world is on the verge of destruction, God will create another destruction which destroys the reason for the destruction. This will restore the balance of the world.

### The karmic point of view (*Karma dristi*)

For a body to appear, there should be a reason. *Karma* is that reason. We get our bodies based on the merits and demerits we have accumulated to experience the accumulated merits and demerits.

The reason for taking up a gross body is *karma* to experience *karma*, for it is only through a gross body we can experience *karma*.

The subtle body chooses the physical body based on one's *karma*. This is the reason each body is different. Some bodies are sick from birth, while others are healthy. Some are in human form, while others are in animal forms. We must accept the body we are in as it is the manifestation of our own merits and demerits. The main *karmas* responsible for one's birth:

1. Individual *karma* (*Vyashti karma*)
2. Collective *karma* (*Samashti karma*)

### Individual *karma* (*Vyashti karma*)

*Vyashti karma* means individual *karma*. One's own merits and demerits responsible for one's birth is individual *karma*.

### Collective *karma* (*Samashti karma*)

*Samashti karma* means collective *karma*. Others' *karma* responsible for one's birth so that they can transact with that being as a part of their *karma* is collective *karma*. For example, our parents must also have the *karma* to give birth and bring us up.

Both individual *karma* and collective *karma* is required and responsible for one's birth. It is believed that the Soul waits until it gets a perfect matching of both these *karmas* to illuminate the body.



### *Avatar's* body

Even for an *avatar* to manifest, *karma* must favour. The *avatars*, however, do not have individual *karma*. They take form only because of collective *karma*. The *avatars* do not have merits and demerits to experience or exhaust. The *avatar* is the consequence of others' merits and demerits.

An *avatar* does not choose their form or body or even the situation they are born into. Their birth happens purely based on the collective *karma* of the people. Fruits of others' action (*samashti karmaphala*) is an *avatar*. The collective *karma* of the people of the world earns the *avatar*.

### The birth of an *avatar*

Lord Krishna details the birth of an *avatar*. He says the *avatar* does not have a birth like us. An *avatar* is unchangeable pure consciousness. The difference between a human and an *avatar's* birth are:

- **Reason:** All beings are born because of their *karma* to experience their *karma*. The *avatar* does not have individual *karma*. An *avatar* is the

consequence of others' *karma* (*samashti karma*).

- **Purpose:** The reason for human birth is to experience one's *prarabdha karma*. The purpose of an *avatar's* birth is to restore righteousness.
- **Knowledge:** The interaction of consciousness (*Atma*) and *jada* (lifelessness/ gross body) is considered as birth for humans and other beings. All beings are born without the knowledge of the Self and are bound by *samsara* (the cycle of death and rebirth). An *avatar* is pure consciousness and is not bound by *samsara*.
- **Material:** Birth for humans is the subtle body talking up a gross body, which is made of and caught up in *maya*. An *avatar* manifests keeping *maya* under its control and not deluded by it.

	Individual	Avatar
The reason for birth	Individual karma and collective karma	Collective karma
The purpose of birth	To experiences one's prarabdha karma	To restore righteousness
Knowledge	Born without knowlege of the Self	An avatar is full consciousness
Material	Subtle born takes up the gross body	Manifests from maya keeping it under control

## Maya

The two powers of *maya* that delude everyone are:

1. The power of concealment (*Avarana shakti*)
2. The power of projection (*Vikshepa shakti*)

### The power of concealment

*Maya* has the power to hide reality. When one mistakes the rope for a snake, the real nature of the rope is hidden. This is the concealment power of *maya*. *Maya* conceals one's real nature. It hides one's true Self from oneself.

### The power of projection

*Maya* can project or create an illusion. The snake was projected on the rope, though it did not exist.

*Maya* first hides and then projects. When one sees the rope as the snake, both the power of *maya* is experienced.

## Avatar and maya

We experience both powers of *maya*. Our Self is hidden from us, and we are deluded into believing we are the bodies. *Maya* hides knowledge.

An *avatar* with *maya* under its control only experiences *maya's* power of projection (*vikshepashakti*). *Maya* does not hide the *avatar's* true Self, which is *Brahman* (*Brahmaswarupa* — full consciousness). An *avatar* is fully aware of its Self. An *avatar* uses *maya's* power to take form.

### How is righteousness protected?

Righteousness is protected by protecting the righteous people and destroying the unrighteous. Destroying the unrighteous means removing the gross body of the unrighteous people.

### The gross body and actions

*Karma* is created and experienced only through a gross body. When the gross body is not available, no actions can be performed. The gross body is an



instrument to perform both good and bad. One on the unrighteous path cannot perform any bad deeds if his gross body is not available to him. The *avatar* descends to destroy such bodies.

The destruction of such bodies is good for others and the unrighteous. One cannot commit further sins when one's gross body is made unavailable, either by destruction or by sickening it. This will stop him from accumulating further demerits.

Destruction or sickening of a deluded person committing sins is a blessing for him. He can take further births to purify himself and evolve spiritually, which is better than being left to commit more sins and accumulate more demerits. The destruction of such gross bodies is done by *avatars* without hatred or judgments, purely for the protection of everyone, including the one destroyed.

### *Narasimha Avatar*



*Nara* means man, and *simha* means lion. *Narasimha* means half lion and half man (a lion-headed man). It is the fourth *avatar* of Lord Vishnu.

Hiranyakashipu performed penance for several years to achieve immortality. Pleased by his dedication, Lord Brahma granted him the boon he wanted. The boon was that he could not be killed during

the day or at night, inside or outside, on earth or in the sky, by a weapon or by a man or an animal. Having obtained the boon, he considered himself God and forbade the worship of any other Gods. He tortured all his people, including his own son. His son Prahlada was an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu, which Hiranyakashipu despised. He gave an order to kill his son. Prahlada, however, broke out of all the attempts of being killed. Enraged, Hiranyakashipu asked Prahlada to show him Lord Vishnu. Prahlada said, *the Lord is everywhere*. For which Hiranyakashipu knocked down a pillar and asked him, *is your Lord here?* Lord Vishnu emerged as *Narasimha* from a pillar which was neither inside nor outside the house at dusk, which is neither day nor night, kept him on his lap, which was neither earth nor the sky and pierced opened his stomach with his nails killing him and saving all his devotees.

As depicted in the story, the *avatars* do not choose their bodies. The *avatar* appears for the sole purpose of destroying the unrighteous and restoring righteousness taking up a body the task demands.

## Verses 1 – 8

Lord Krishna said,

*I taught this imperishable *Yoga* to Surya (the Sun God). He taught it to his son Manu, and Manu taught it to his son Ikshvaku. 4.1*

*The royal sages learned this *yoga* which was passed down in succession.*

***But with time, the teachings have deteriorated.*** 4.2

***As you are my devotee and a friend, I shall reveal to you the supreme secret of this eternal [yoga](#).*** 4.3

This indestructible knowledge about the [Brahman](#) has been passed down to the [kshatriya](#) clan (the kings and warriors). If the [kshatriyas](#) protect the country, this knowledge has to be with them. So, they can rule the country and teach their people the righteous way of living. Kings like Janaka were examples of [raja rishis](#) (a sage-like king). However, over time, the imperishable knowledge has depleted as people lose their self-control and sense of direction. Therefore, Lord Krishna teaches this Supreme knowledge to Arjuna to revive the righteous lifestyles once lived.

Arjuna asked,

***The Sun God was born long before you were. How am I to understand that you taught Him this [Yoga](#)?*** 4.4

Lord Krishna said,

***Both you and I have passed through many births. I can remember all of them, but you cannot.*** 4.5

***Although I am unborn and imperishable by nature, and the Lord of all beings, yet subjugating my nature, I manifest myself by my own [maya](#).*** 4.6

***Whenever there is a decline in righteousness and predominance of unrighteousness, I manifest myself.*** 4.7

***I manifest myself in every age to defend the good, destroy the wicked, and establish righteousness.*** 4.8

Having cleared Arjuna's doubt by saying He is an [avatar](#); Lord Krishna describes that obtaining full knowledge of His birth and actions will lead one to liberation.





## Part II

# The Path to Liberation

## Understanding God

Lord Krishna says one who understands His birth correctly will become one with Him after death. The one who understands Lord Krishna is *Brahman* and also understands that oneself is *Atman* (Soul) and that *Atman* is *Brahman*. One must understand:

1. An *avatar* does not have merits or demerits, and its birth is not due to *karma*.
2. The world's collective *karma* is the reason for its manifestation.
3. Lord Krishna does not have a birth like other beings. His birth is a manifestation of *maya* keeping *maya* under His control.
4. His sole responsibility is to restore righteousness.

When there is an object outside of oneself, the object can subject one to joy, sorrow, fear or other emotions. This is *samsara*. Fear, for instance, arises when there is you, and there is another. The fear is due to duality (or plurality). When there isn't a second, there is no fear. The one who understands God's birth understands his own birth. He knows he is the Soul, and his Soul is that *Brahman*. This knowledge eradicates all fears and removes *samsara*. He attains *Brahman* on leaving his body (*videha mukthi*).

## Steps to attain liberation

One cannot attain and establish with this Supreme knowledge without eliminating these three hindrances:

1. Attachment
2. Fear
3. Anger

Fear and anger are both the outcome of attachments. The thought that the object of our desire could perish inculcates fear in us. Anything we fear also shows us what we are attached to. When we encounter a barrier to the object of our desire, it manifests as anger in us. These impurities are removed from a *karma yogi* as a result of his selfless actions, which qualify him for knowledge.

### Hindrances to Liberation



When the mind is devoid of impurities, God-consciousness increases in that person, he will constantly contemplate God as though smitten by Him. One's nature is transformed into *sattva guna* (awareness) from *rajas guna* (passion/action). In this state of devotion (*bhakti*), one surrenders to the Supreme. Faith and surrender are important steps to attaining knowledge.

Attaining and establishing with the knowledge attained is penance. *Jnana*

*yoga* that comprises of listening (*sravana*), contemplating (*manana*), and meditating (*nididhyasana*) is the penance to attain and establish with the knowledge.

*Karma yoga* purifies the mind. The mind is then ready for knowledge, the knowledge (*jnana*) eradicates ignorance. The fire of knowledge burns the manifestations of ignorance which are attachment, fear, and anger.

### **Why do only some people attain liberation?**

Liberation is not something granted but chosen by oneself. It is said we receive what we ask for. If one asks for material well-being, God cherishes him with material well-being. If one asks for purity of mind, he is granted that. If one asks for liberation, he will be liberated. But one cannot ask for both material pleasure and liberation because the path to liberation is only through renunciation. It is, therefore, solely up to a person to choose.

*That which is not asked for is also not granted.*

Regardless of what one chooses, the path of material pursuits (*pravritti marga* — the path of action) or liberation (*nivritti marga* — the path of knowledge), Lord Krishna says they are both given by him.

### **Liberation is not everybody's goal**

Though liberation has been glorified in several scriptures, and many have set examples of attaining it, it is not everyone's goal. This is because the path to attaining it is very unrewarding to begin with, and extremely tough to pursue. People desire instant gratification, for they do not have the power to foresee the greater. Attaining liberation is an arduous job. The ones who desire the results of their actions instantly are involved in worshipping demigods for fast and favourable results.

### **The story of Kisa Gautami**



Kisa Gautami was a wealthy young woman whose only son (who was one year old) died suddenly due to illness. Unable to endure the loss, she took her deceased son from house to house, begging to bring him back to life. Seeing her desperation, an elderly man asked her to meet the Buddha. The Buddha told her he could bring her son back to life if she would bring him a few mustard seeds from a house where no one had ever died. Kisa, filled with hope, went from house to house and asked them if they had lost a son or a daughter, a father or mother, partner or kin in their family. They replied, *the living are a few, but the dead are many*. She realized what Buddha wanted her to understand — that suffering is part and parcel of everyone's life and mortality is inevitable. When she came back without a seed of mustard, Buddha told

her,

**Though one should live a hundred years without seeing the deathless state, yet better indeed is a single day's life of one who**

sees the Sublime Truth.

- Dhammapada 114

Kisa Gautami accepted the fact that death is inevitable. She became his disciple and attained liberation.

It is the innate nature of humans to look for instant solutions and gratification. Although we do not want to experience sorrow or loss, the path to liberation is first understanding the real nature of all manifestations — the transience. Kisa accepted and endured the pain of the inevitable. She searched for the truth beyond, which led her to liberation — everlasting bliss.

We accept joy in lieu of bliss. This is a compromise many make without knowing. The arduous path to knowledge and liberation is the greater good which not many seek. Desiring liberation in itself is a power not many have.

## Verses 9 – 12

Lord Krishna said,

*The one who knows the truth about My divine birth and actions will not be born again after leaving his body. He will attain Me.* 4.9

*Freed from attachment, fear, and anger, wholly dedicated to Me, finding shelter in Me, and purified by knowledge and penance, many have attained Me.* 4.10

*Howsoever men worship Me, I reward them accordingly. It is My path, that men follow in all respects.* 4.11

*Those who desire the fruits of their actions in this world worship the demigods because actions quickly bear fruit.* 4.12

Lord Krishna talks about *gunas* and how to refine them for the greatest good.

### The four castes

The four castes are:

- *Brahmins*: The *brahmins* are the priest of the temples. They are learned and scholarly who took up teaching.
- *Kshatriyas*: The *kshatriyas* are the rulers, warriors or administrators.
- *Vaishyas*: The *vaishyas* are the agriculturalists or the merchants.
- *Shudras*: The *shudras* are the labourers or the service providers.

Lord Krishna says He created the fourfold caste based on the *guna* and *karma*.

### Division based on the three *gunas*:

*Guna* is defined as the inherent nature of everyone and everything. They are three *gunas*:

- *Sattva guna* is the quality of awareness, calmness, harmony, and purity.
- *Rajas guna* is the quality of passion, activity, egoism, desire, and drive.
- *Tamas guna* is the quality of delusion, dullness, inactivity, lethargy, ignorance, and destruction.

According to the *gunas*, not all men are of the same nature. The preponderance of the different *gunas* among men creates differences in their nature.

**Brahmin (The learned)**: Those with predominant *sattva guna* followed by *rajas*

*guna* and then *tamas guna* are *brahmins* by *guna*. They have a preponderance of the mode of goodness.

**Kshatriya (The warriors):** Those with predominant *rajas guna* followed by *sattva guna* and then by *tamas guna* are *kshatriyas*. The *kshatriyas* have a preponderance of the mode of passion. For a warrior, *sattva* is the second dominant *guna*. The one who has more *sattva guna* is into giving. Sacrifice is a predominant attribute of a warrior. His intention to protect and serve the people even at the cost of his own life is *sattva*.

**Vaishya (The merchants):** Those with predominant *rajas guna* followed by *tamas guna* and then by *sattva guna* are the *vaishyas*. A merchant is predominantly focused on actions that promise him well-being. Merchandise is not a sacrifice and is done for personal gains. Therefore, *sattva guna* is lesser in a *vaishya* than in that of a warrior.

**Shudra (The service providers):** Those with predominant *tamas guna* followed by *rajas guna* and then by *sattva guna* are the *shudras*. *Tamas guna* is attributed to dullness. It manifests as dullness or inaction of the mind. One with a predominant *tamas guna* does not have the drive to lead himself or the others. He is better at following directions than leading and better at working with the body than intellectually.

Castes based on the Gunas			
	Predominant	Dominant	Less dominant
Brahmin	Sattva	Rajas	Tamas
Kshatriya	Rajas	Sattva	Tamas
Vaishya	Rajas	Tamas	Sattva
Shudra	Tamas	Rajas	Sattva

### Division based on *karma*:

*Karma*, in this context, means the work one does. Based on one's work, one can again belong in one of these castes. Lord Krishna mentioned the importance of one's duty and taking up duty based on one's innate nature. Those in professions like teaching are *Brahmins*. Those who protect their people are the *kshatriyas*. The merchants are the *vaishyas*, and the service providers are the *shudras*. There are only two categories for the divisions that Lord Krishna discusses in the Gita.

A person can belong to any caste based on his *guna* and *karma*. Caste is not determined by birth or based on the caste of one's parents. The innate nature is unique to each, and so birth is not the right scale to measure one's caste.

*One's caste is based only on his nature and vocation.*

Irrespective of which caste one may belong to by *guna* or *karma* or even by birth, one must aim at becoming a *brahmin* by *guna*; that is, one must move towards *sattva guna*.

***Guna brahmin* is superior**

By *guna*, everyone has the choice to become the highest *brahmin*. And only with the *guna* of a *brahmin* can one attain liberation. Liberation is attained purely based on qualification and not by one's birth or work (*karma*). A predominant *sattva guna* is required in one to attain knowledge and retain it. For this reason, *brahmins* by *guna* are referred to as superior. This is solely based on *guna* and not *karma* or by birth. Everyone can and must try to become a *brahmin* by *guna*, by constantly refining one's *gunas*. Later chapters detail more on the *gunas* and how to transition to higher *guna*.

### The three robbers

(A story by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa)

Once a wealthy man was passing through a forest. Three robbers robbed him of all his possessions. One of them said, *let's kill him*, and took out his sword. The other interrupted and said, *let us tie him instead* and tied him to a tree, and they walked away. The third robber returned to the man after a while and set him free and walked him out of the forest. The world is compared to the forest, and the three robbers are compared to the three *gunas*. They rob a man of knowledge — his biggest wealth. *Tamas* (the first robber) destroys him, *rajas* (the second robber) bind him, and *sattva* (the third robber) rescues him. But the important thing to remember is that *sattva* is also a robber. *Sattva* shows him the way but does not lead him home.

### Lord Krishna is a non-doer

Lord Krishna having said He created the castes based on one's *guna* and *karma*, tells Arjuna to understand Him as a non-doer. This may sound paradoxical and must be looked at from two standpoints:

- When Lord Krishna said He created the four castes, He meant creating it along with *maya*.
- When Lord Krishna says He is a non-doer, He talks about His real Self — *Brahman*, who is a non-doer and a non-reaper.

Lord Krishna asks Arjuna to understand that *maya* is His potency and that He is pure consciousness, completely transcendental to *maya*. Though He created the castes along with *maya*, one must know Him as the indestructible *Brahman*.

### Actions do not bind Him

All actions have consequences. By that law, a doer is always the reaper. However, Lord Krishna says His actions do not bind Him because:

- He does not desire the result of the action,
- He knows He is *Brahman* and that He is not the doer but the witness.

The wise who has the wisdom to see Lord Krishna as both — the *Brahman* and the *maya* will also have the wisdom to see himself as both — the Soul and non-soul. He who knows Lord Krishna as the Absolute Reality, interacting with the material nature for creating, also knows himself as pure consciousness interacting with *jada* (lifeless, the body). For him, actions do not create fruits. The one with the knowledge of Self is not bound by his actions.

Lord Krishna asks Arjuna to perform his duties like the other *mumukshus* (the ones yearning for liberation) before him, for they had the knowledge which did not bind their actions. They knew that they were not the body or the actions from their body. They knew they were the Souls. They performed actions for either of the two reasons:

- To attain purity of the mind as a preparation for liberation.
- They performed their duties as *lokasamgraha* (for the welfare of the world) if they had the *prarabdha* for it after liberation.

Lord Krishna insists Arjuna perform his duties to attain purity of mind in



preparation for the greater good and tells him more about actions.

## Verses 13 – 15

Lord Krishna said,

*The fourfold caste has been created by Me according to the difference in **guna** and **karma**; although I created it, know Me as the non-doer and immutable.* 4.13

*My actions do not bind Me as I have no desire for the fruits of it. One who knows Me thus is not bound by actions.* 4.14

*Knowing this, the ancient seekers of liberation performed actions; therefore, you also perform actions like these predecessors.* 4.15

Lord Krishna details Arjuna about actions and inaction, thereby revealing the central concept of this chapter.



### Part III

## *Jnana Karma Sannyasa*

*Jnana Karma Sannyasa* is the central concept of this chapter and one of the Gita's. Lord Krishna begins the discourse by telling Arjuna that he will reveal a subtle truth that even the learned are confused about. It is the knowledge of action, inaction, and forbidden actions.

### **The inaction in action and the action in inaction**

Lord Krishna says the one who sees action in inaction and inaction in action is wise. This may sound paradoxical, but some concepts are conveyed paradoxically to convey the message clearly.

When one does not know anything about an object, the object can be explained directly. But when one has understood it incorrectly, it is necessary to explain it from his point of view to correct his perception. A paradox here helps tilt the perception and helps one understand correctly.

### **The moving trees**

A boy and his father were on a boat in a canal. Seeing the trees on the bank of the canal, which appeared to be moving, the boy said to his father, *the trees are moving*. Though the father knew for certain that the trees weren't moving, he replied, *the moving trees are not moving*. Had the father said the trees were not moving, the boy would have searched for the trees that were not moving. The father corrected the boy's understanding from the boy's point of view. The boy understood that the trees which he thought were moving were not moving.

Therefore, the paradoxical statement was required to tilt the perception. From the story, we understand that the trees which appear to move indeed do not. This is an example of inaction in action which will be discussed.

### **The stationed ship**

The boy from the shore of the sea saw a ship at a distance and told his father, *the ship is not moving*. The father replied *the not moving ship is moving*. The ships that are far seem stationed even though they move. This is an example of action in inaction.

### **The inaction in action**

The body and mind are both *jada* (lifeless). The Soul illuminates them. As the Vedas refer to the body and the mind as *jada* (lifeless), it is, therefore, a common misconception that the Soul performs the actions through the lifeless body. Even some learned think so.

We should understand that the Soul is the reason for the body's existence. It illuminates the intellect of the subtle body. The illuminated intellect, along with the mind, acts through the body they are in. The body and the mind perform the actions. Because it appears to many as though the Soul is responsible for all the actions, Lord Krishna says that what we think is acting is not acting.

The Soul is pure consciousness and is only the witness which will never



perform any actions. The body is action-oriented (*karma svarupa*). The body is pushed into action because of the three *gunas*. Actions are the functions of the *gunas*, and the Soul is not made of the *gunas*. This concept was briefed earlier by saying — the Soul neither kills nor gets killed, and the Soul is a non-doer and a non-reaper.

#### **The action in inaction**

The body and the mind made of the *gunas* cannot be devoid of actions. Even when they rest or appear to be in complete inaction, their nature is action. They are action-oriented (*karma svarupa*). Therefore, we must see the action in inaction.

**The InAction in Action - The Soul never performs any action.**

**The Action in Inaction - The body and the mind are always in action.**

#### **The benefits of seeing action in inaction**

Many assume liberation is achieved only when there are no thoughts or actions. However, we must understand that the body and the mind are action-oriented. Even if they appear to be in complete inaction for a while, they will resume action sooner or later. It is important to know that as long as we are in a body, there will be action. Liberation is not the lack of action, for that is not possible. One must find peace within the thoughts and actions.

#### **The benefits of seeing inaction in action**

The Soul does not perform any actions while the body and the mind are acting out. We are that pure consciousness which is only the witness to these actions. Not knowing this, many are trapped in guilt, regret, shame and other emotions about their actions. Knowing that the body acts out its wish, but the Soul never acts, frees us of these emotions, which is *samsara*. The body and mind that perform the actions will reap the results of their actions. The Soul is neither a doer nor a reaper.

#### **The knowledge about action liberates one**

For the one who knows he is the Soul, the work done by his body does not bind him. The knowledge about action and inaction burns all the merits and demerits for the sage. His *sanchita karma* (the sum-total of all actions done by one during all previous births) and *agami karma* (newly created *karma* which will affect the future) is burnt by this knowledge. He lives as long as his *prarabdha karma* (the part of all accumulated *karma*, which is to be experienced through the present incarnation) facilitates and once he leaves the body, he does not have to be born again.

#### **Different types of ascetics**

There are several types of ascetics, two of which are:

1. The sage on the path of action (*pravritti marg*)
2. The sage on the path of return (*nivritti marg*)

#### **The sage on the path of action (*pravritti marg*)**

Some attain knowledge and are liberated while still doing their duties. They may be on the path of action, living amidst worldly duties even after liberation. They do not leave their responsibility and move to the *sannyasa ashram* (ascetic lifestyle) to attain liberation or after attaining liberation.

#### **The attributes of this sage**

- He is not attached to his work or the fruits of his work. He does not think "I am the doer" and also does not expect to indulge in the fruits of his actions. Because of his knowledge, he has become ever content in the Self.

For this wise man, the action becomes inaction.

- He does not depend on anyone or anything. We depend on people to achieve our goals or desires. The more the desires, the more we are dependent on others. He does not have desires and therefore is independent.

For this saint, even when involved in different activities due to *prarabdha*, the activities do not bind him as they do not generate merits or demerits.

#### **His state of mind**

- He is devoid of all attachments.
- He is liberated
- His mind is established in the knowledge
- He works for the sake of sacrifice (*yajna*) until his *prarabdha* finishes.

For him, his work, along with their fruits, gets destroyed.

#### **The sage on the path of return (*nivritti marg*)**

Some choose the path of return to attain knowledge and liberation. They leave their responsibilities behind and pursue their only goal — liberation.

#### **The attributes of this sage**

- This sage does not have any expectations from anyone.
- He has complete control of his mind and body.
- He has renounced everything, even the necessities like clothing and shelter. He has removed "mine-ness" from all objects around him.
- He only works to keep his body alive without attachment to his body to execute his *prarabdha*.

For this saint, the ego has dissolved, and his subtle body has no imprints left. Therefore, his actions are not capable of bringing him fruits.

#### **His state of mind**

- He is happy with whatever ever he gets. He has no demands.
- He is free from the pairs of opposites like joy-sorrow, hot-cold, pride-shame, and health-sickness. He accepts the duality, and his mind does not waver in them.
- He has no envy for anyone.
- He is even minded in success and failure.

When one achieves this state of mind, no action can bind him.

According to the law of *karma*:

- One's merits and demerits have to be experienced by one alone.
- One has to experience the consequences of all his actions to negate them.

But the actions of the wise do not abide by these laws. They deflect the laws of *karma*. The reason for that is explained below.

#### **Kriya Karaka Phalarupa Jagat**

*Kriya* means *karma* (action), *karaka* means reason, *phala* means fruits, *rupa* means form and *jagat* means the world. *Kriya karaka phalarupa jagat* means the world is in the form of reason, actions, and fruits.

Anything that helps in accomplishing an action is called a *karaka*. The reason for an action is *karaka*. Any action performed inevitably results in fruits as merits or demerits. Therefore, from *karaka* comes *kriya* and from *kriya* the *phala*. That is, from the reason comes the action and from the action comes the fruits.

The reason for the action causes the action, and the action creates the fruits. This is how the world functions.

#### **Different types of *Karaka***

The different reasons for action (*karakas*) are:

1. Doer (*Karta*)

2. Object (*Karman*)
3. Instrument (*Karana*)
4. For (*Sampradana*)
5. From (*Apadana*)
6. On (*Adikarana*)

The above six reasons create an action. Not all six reasons need to be present for an action to happen, but at least one of them has to be present.

If none of the six reasons is present, there will be no action.

An example of a sentence with all the six reasons for the action is, *having arrived from the town, Raghava cooks rice in a vessel with the help of firewood for the priest*. In this sentence:

1. The town is *apadana* (from)
2. Rice is the *karma* (object)
3. The vessel is the *adikarana* (on)
4. Firewood is the *karana* (instrument)
5. The priest is *sampradana* (for)
6. Raghava is the *karta* (doer)

### Knowledge and the *karakas*

For the one with the knowledge about the actions, there are no reasons for their actions. When there are no *karakas*, there is no *kriya*. The action is not considered an action without the reason. For instance, when one kicks another while asleep, he is not guilty or held responsible for his action as there is no reason for that action. When the reason (*karaka-buddhi*) is absent, the action is not considered an action.

When an ignorant performs an action, he thinks, "I am" (*karta*) performing the action (*karma*). There are reasons (*karakas*) for his actions.

When the wise performs an action, he considers both himself and the action as *Brahman*. There is non-duality. And in non-duality, there are no reasons (*karakas*), and, therefore, his actions do not yield fruits.

Lord Krishna gives an example of performing actions without *karakas* in them in one of the verses of the Gita.

Ritualistic sacrifices (*yajna*) are a common form of worship. In these practices, oblations are offered into the sacred fire as a sacrifice, along with chanting hymns. He shows how the wise perform these rituals.



*brahmaarpanam brahma havir brahmaagnau Brahmanaa hutam*

*brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahma-karma-samaadhinaa* 4.24

Sanskrit words	English translation	The karakas
Brahman	The Absolute reality	
Arpanam	The sacrificial utensils (ladle, spoon, etc.)	Instrument (karana)
Havir	The oblation (ghee)	Object (karman)
Brahmana	The one performing the ritual	Doer (karta)
Hutam	Offered	
Agnau	Fire	On (adikarana)
Brahmaiva	That is Brahman only	
Gantavyam	To be attained	
Tena rahma karma samaadhinaa	By one whose consciousness is absorbed in Brahman.	

This verse means, for the wise, it is *Brahman* performing the sacrifice by offering the oblation, which is *Brahman*, by *Brahman*, into the fire that is *Brahman*, to attain *Brahman*. The ladle, the oblation, the fire, and the doer are all *Brahman*, and there is no duality.



This verse is often recited by many before eating to remove the duality. This removes the attitude that the food is an object of enjoyment and that the one eating is the enjoyer. Reciting this verse reminds the eater that the food and the eater are both the same, the *Brahman* and removes the indulgence out of the action. The little Krishna with his toe in his mouth is a symbolic representation of non-duality. It means the eaten and the eater are the same. They both are *Brahman*.

## Verses 16 – 24

Lord Krishna said,

*What is action? What is inaction? Even the learned are deluded in this matter. Therefore, I shall explain to you in detail and with this knowledge, you will be freed from **samsara**.* 4.16

*Action, prohibited action, and inaction should be clearly understood, for the science of **karma** is profound but hard to comprehend.* 4.17

*He who sees inaction in action and action in inaction is wise among men; he is the sage who is a true performer of all actions.* 4.18

*The wise call him a sage, whose actions are devoid of desires, sense gratification and whose actions have been burnt by the fire of knowledge.* 4.19

*Having given up attachment to the fruits of action, always content and independent, he does not do anything even when engaged in actions. 4.20*

*Free from desire, with body and mind under control, renouncing all possessions, he incurs no sin through mere bodily actions. 4.21*

*Content with whatever comes to him on its own accord, free from envy and the dualities of life. Being equipoised in success and failure, though acting, he is not bound. 4.22*

*For him, who is devoid of attachment, liberated, mind established in knowledge, performs only sacrifices, his actions dissolve away. 4.23*

*For him, who is completely absorbed in God-consciousness, the oblation is **Brahman**, the ladle is **Brahman**, the act of offering is **Brahman**, and the sacrificial fire is **Brahman**. For whom everything is **Brahman** attains **Brahman**. 4.24*



## Part IV

# The Sacrifices

Lord Krishna suggests twelve sacrifices (*yajnas*) which will lead one steadily on the path to liberation. Eleven among them lead the seeker to knowledge. The twelfth *yajna* is knowledge itself. Knowledge is the final sacrifice which liberates one. Lord Krishna compares these ritualistic sacrifices to the fire sacrifices to explain what the oblations are and what the outcome of the sacrifices are.

### 1. *Deva yajna* (The *yajna* of the Gods)

*Devas* are divine beings, usually a representation of certain forces of nature. *Deva yajna* is the ritualistic sacrifice done as a worship of the demigods or the divine beings. In this *yajna*, the oblation is any oblation (e.g., ghee). The fire is fire. This sacrifice is often performed to bring the sacrificial attitude in one towards God.

### 2. *Brahman yajna* (The *yajna* of *Brahman*)

The sacrifice of the self in *Brahman* is called *Brahman yajna*. This sacrifice is performed by those who desire liberation. In this *yajna*, the oblation is the "I" (the ego). The fire is *Brahman*. In this *yajna*, one sacrifices his ego in *Brahman* to become *Brahman*. After this sacrifice, there is no more duality. This *yajna* is done by those yearning for liberation.

### 3. *Dama yajna* (The *yajna* of sense control)

*Dama* is the control of the senses. In this *yajna*, the oblation is the five senses. The fire is discipline. This *yajna* is to sacrifice the five senses to the willpower to discipline them.

### 4. *Vishaya grahana yajna* (The *yajna* of grasping good things)

*Vishaya grahana* means absorbing. In this *yajna*, the oblation is good things. The fire is the five senses. Absorbing good things in itself is a *yajna*. To see, hear and learn good things requires a lot of willpower. Choosing the good over instant gratification is discipline and is a sacrifice too.

### 5. *Sama yajna* (The *yajna* of mind control)

Irrespective of how much one can control the senses, unwanted information is bound to enter the mind. All the information that enters the mind does not trouble the mind. Constant meditation on unwanted thoughts leads to desires which then lead to different emotions.

When something unwanted enters through the senses, it is just one thought in mind. But as one broods over it, the thoughts multiply. It is the nature of the mind to meditate on pleasure objects. Meditating on a thought strengthens the thought. The thoughts eventually become one's nature.

It is hard to control the mind that controls everything. The mind can be split into the mind and the intellect. To control the mind, the "I" consciousness should be moved to the intellect. With the help of intellect, it is possible to control the mind.

Other than the senses influencing the mind, one is influenced by their *vasanas* (tendencies) also. The imprints (*samskaras*) are also already there in one's mind from many previous incarnations that bring him different emotions. With this baggage, when one enters the fire of the sacrifice, the fire cannot discipline



one. The power of discrimination is required. With the knowledge of what is right and what is wrong, one can tame the mind.

The mind chooses based on comfort. If the discrimination power shows the mind that something is not an element of joy, the mind gets out of the indulgence. For example, the mind likes to indulge in food that looks desirable. But if the same food is contaminated, and the intellect tells the mind that the food is not an object of enjoyment anymore, the mind obeys. The joy out of the food is gone in an instant.

We are inclined towards enjoying pleasure objects. If the mind, however, realizes that the object will not give pleasure but sorrow, we will not indulge in it. The discrimination power must guide the mind. Two ways to control the mind:

- **Discrimination** - The scriptures dictate what is right and wrong. By constant practice, one can control the mind.
- **Meditation** – By constant meditation on the acquired knowledge, one can bring the mind under control.

In this *yajna*, the oblation is the mind. The fire is the discipline, and the fuel for the fire is discrimination.

#### 6. *Dravya yajna* (The *yajna* of charity)

*Dravya yajna* means charity. Distribution of wealth, knowledge, affection, kindness, essentially anything that is given away without expecting returns is *dravya yajna*.

Giving up ownership of objects is a rehearsal for an ascetic lifestyle. This sacrifice helps build renunciation. In this *yajna*, the oblation is the donation. The fire is the beneficiary.

#### 7. *Tapo Yagna* (The *yajna* of penance)

*Tapas* can be translated as penance, self-discipline, and self-denial. *Tapas* is any practice that does not enslave us to our senses. Doing one's duty is *tapas* in *karma yoga*, and meditation is *tapas* in *jnana yoga*. Various types of fasting and other self-denial practices are also *tapas*. Penance strengthens one spiritually. In this *yajna*, the oblation is indiscipline. The fire is willpower.

#### 8. *Yoga yajna* (The *yajna* of yoga)

The *yoga yajna* in the Gita refers to Patanjali's *ashtanga yoga*. Patanjali was an ancient sage who defined *yoga* as having eight components. The eight components of *yoga* are:

1. *Yama*: These are the ethical rules. This emphasizes the don'ts.
1. *Niyama*: They are the virtuous habits and behaviours one should build.
2. *Asana*: *Asana* is perfecting postures. It discusses different *yoga* postures.
3. *Pranayama*: *Pranayama* is the practice of regulating the breath.
4. *Pratyahara*: *Pratyahara* is being aware by controlling the senses.
5. *Dharana*: *Dharana* is introspection.
6. *Dhyana*: *Dhyana* is meditation. It is training the scattered mind to focus on one thing.
7. *Samadhi*: *Samadhi* is the union with the subject of meditation. It is the result to be achieved out of meditation.

#### 9. *Swadhyaya yajna* (The *yajna* of learning)

*Swadhyaya yajna* is the *yajna* of learning. The scriptures were learned by the students in such a way that all the Sanskrit verses (*slokas*) were first learned by heart without understanding them. The Vedas were chanted repeatedly to memorize them first.

When the mind was already familiar with the words, the teacher explained their meaning. The reason for this practice is that our minds can grasp one piece of information easily at a time. Learning both the verses and the meaning at the



same time is a difficult task. Memorizing the scriptures is *swadhyaya yajna*. In this *yajna*, the oblation is ignorance and *vasanas* (tendencies). The fire is the wisdom.

#### **10. Jnana yajna (The yajna of knowledge)**

*Jnana Yajna* is grasping the meaning of the verses learned. Listening to the teaching, contemplating, and meditation on that which was thought is *jnana yoga*. In this *yajna*, the oblation is ignorance. The fire is the knowledge.

#### **11. Pranayama (The yajna of breath)**

*Pranayama* is a part of *ashtanga yoga* which is re-emphasized here. *Prana* means breath, *ayama* means controlling (restraining, extending, stretching).

*Pranayama* consists of three parts:

1. *Puraka*: *Puraka* is the process of filling in the breath (inhalation).
2. *Kumbhaka*: *Kumbhaka* is the process of holding the breath inside the body for a period of time (retain).
3. *Rechaka*: *Rechaka* is the process of releasing the breath (exhalation).

*Prana* can be further divided into five based on its functions:

1. *Prana*: Governs respiration.
2. *Apana*: Governs elimination.
3. *Samana*: Governs assimilation, digestion
4. *Udana*: Governs growth, movement
5. *Vyana*: Governs circulation.

*Prana* controls and regulates various functions of our body. *Pranayama* is extremely beneficial to both the mind and body. It has to be learned from a teacher only; otherwise, it can have contrary effects. *Pranayama* should be done only after perfecting food, sleep and other aspects of wellbeing.

#### **12. Ahara niyama yajna (The yajna of food)**

This is the method of systematic regulation of one's diet. Many scriptures recommend fasting and eating correctly. According to *yoga shastra*, the food taken must be divided into portions. Half of what one eats should be solid, and the remaining half of the stomach should be filled with air and water in equal parts. One must always eat fresh, healthy and limited food. In this *yajna*, the oblation is the uncontrolled *prana*. The fire is the controlled *prana*. *Prana* (lifeforce) needs food to sustain the body.

## **Verses 25 – 30**

Lord Krishna said,

*Some yogis offer sacrifice to the demigods (deva-yajna); others offer the self as a sacrifice into the fire of Brahman (Brahma yajna). 4.25*

*Some offer their senses of hearing and other senses as sacrifices in the fire of restraint; others offer sense objects as a sacrifice in the fire of the senses. 4.26*

*Again, others sacrifice all the functions of the senses and life-forces into the fire of the yoga of self-restraint ignited by knowledge. 4.27*

*Some offer their wealth; others offer severe austerities; some practice the eightfold path of yoga; and yet others study the scriptures and acquire the transcendental knowledge as a sacrifice while observing strict vows. 4.28*

*Some offer the out-going breath in the in-coming and the in-coming in*

*the out-going as a sacrifice, while others practice restraining their incoming and out-going breaths.* 4.29

*Others, by regulating their food, offer the vital forces in the vital forces. All the knowers of the sacrifice become free from sin by performing the sacrifices.* 4.30

Lord Krishna says that by eating the remnants of the sacrifice one attains *Brahman*. Without performing the sacrifices, one will not even attain pleasure on earth. Even material pleasure is the consequence of leading a virtuous life. If one does not follow *dharma* (righteousness), there is no pleasure even in this world.

Among the many sacrifices mentioned in the Vedas, Lord Krishna discussed twelve of them. The Vedas come from *Brahman*, and so do the sacrifices. He says even though one may perform the sacrifices, he should regard himself as the non-doer (the witness). The actions do not come from *Atma* (Soul) but *anatma* (non-soul). The body and the mind perform these actions. The one who understands *jnana karma sannyasa* knows this.

### **The greatest of all sacrifices**

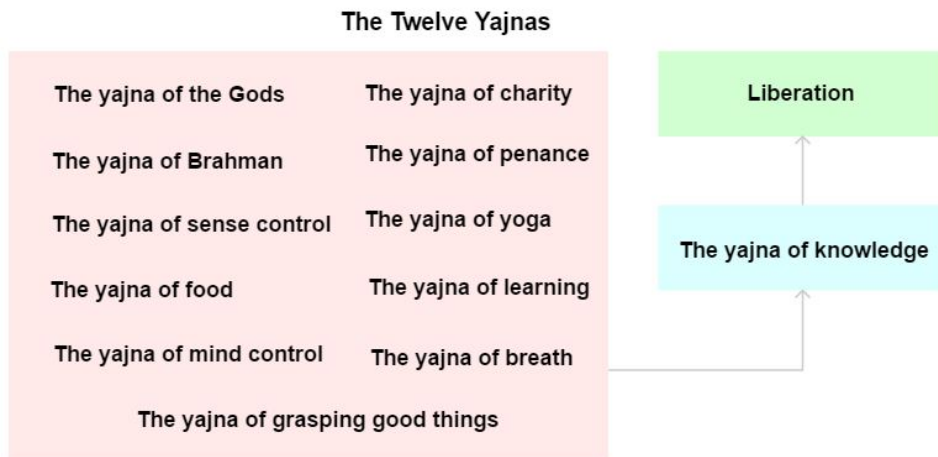
*Jnana yajna*, the *yajna* of knowledge, is considered the greatest of the sacrifices as:

- All other sacrifice gives temporary results. Only knowledge leads one to liberation, which is permanent.
- Only the *yajna* of knowledge helps one attain all four human goals: *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (desire) and *moksha* (liberation). No other sacrifices lead one to liberation.
- Without knowledge, one thinks he is the doer and reaper, which keeps one in *samsara*.

Many think these twelve sacrifices are themselves the goal. For instance, some think practising *yoga* is the goal. However, *yoga* is just an instrument for getting the mind and the body ready for the ultimate goal. *Yoga* in itself or any other sacrifice is not the goal. Some sacrifices are done to tame the mind and the body, and some are done to build virtues and renunciation.

Once a person is ready for the knowledge, there is no need to pursue any of these prescribed sacrifices. When the body and the mind are ready for knowledge, the only goal should be is to attain knowledge and establish with it.

When these sacrifices build the desire for liberation in one, he can leave all other sacrifices. Every other *yajna* can be sacrificed for *jnana yajna* (knowledge). When one attains knowledge, all the actions end there. Every other practice keeps one as a doer and a reaper. Only knowledge breaks this cycle.



## Verses 31 – 33

Lord Krishna said,

*Those who eat the remnants (the nectar) of the sacrifice attain the eternal **Brahman**. Without sacrifices, one will not attain fulfilment even in this world, then where is the hope for the other worlds?* 4.31

*Many types of sacrifices are described in the Vedas. Know that the sacrifices are all born out of actions (thoughts, words, and deeds). Knowing this, you shall be liberated.* 4.32

*The sacrifice of knowledge is superior to all the other sacrifices, for the perfection of all actions culminates in transcendental knowledge.* 4.33

Having described the superior of all sacrifices — the knowledge, Lord Krishna details how one should attain it.



## Part V

# The *Guru*

First of all, it is very rare to even realize that one is suffering in *samsara*. Even fewer people know that they could be freed from it. Even among them, only a handful of people understand that the means to liberation is by attaining the knowledge of the Self. Such awareness comes to them as a result of virtuous lives led and penance performed in multiple lifetimes.

### Knowledge

#### Where should the knowledge of the Self come from?

The knowledge of the Self must be attained from a *guru*. A *guru* is often translated as a teacher, but a *guru* is much more than that. A *guru* is an exemplar who imparts values and knowledge and a guide who helps realize one's Soul. A *guru* is an honoured and trusted spiritual master with the knowledge of the Absolute. A *guru* is one who dispels ignorance or darkness.

*The syllable **gu** means darkness, the syllable **ru** means he who dispels them.*

*Because of the power to dispel darkness, the guru is thus named.*

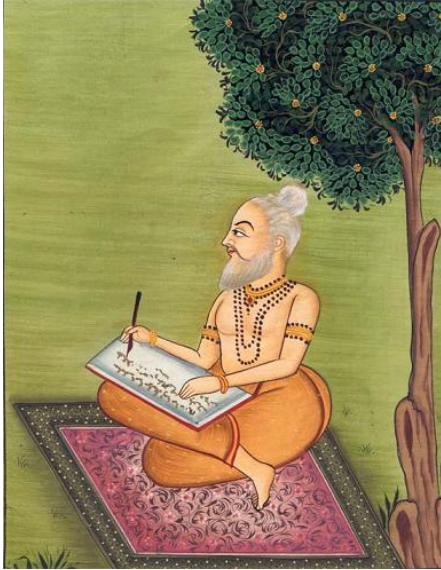
**- Advayataraka Upanishad, verse 16**

To teach the Vedas, the *guru* should have these qualifications:

- The complete knowledge of *Brahman*.
- Achieved oneness with *Brahman*.

#### *Guru-shishya parampara*:

*Guru* means teacher, *shishya* means student, and *parampara* means lineage. In the lineage of *guru-shishya*, the teacher systematically transfers the teachings to his students orally. All types of knowledge, including the Vedas, music, scriptures, architecture, and *yoga*, are transferred in this lineage. The students eventually master the knowledge the teacher offers.



In this tradition, the student resides with the teacher like a family member and acquires knowledge. The three different types of *gurus* from who one can acquire the knowledge of *Brahman* are:

1. *Kevala srotriya*
2. *Kevala Brahmanishta*
3. *Srotriya Brahmanishta*

#### *Kevala srotriya*

*Kevala* means only, *srotriya* is one who has learned Vedic scriptures formally from a *guru* and can recite them thoroughly. Everyone who learns the scriptures may not always understand it or have achieved the union with *Brahman*. For some, these teachings are only registered well as words without having understood their

meanings.

The ones who do not have all the qualities and qualifications to receive the teachings, to begin with, may not have achieved the union with *Brahman*. When the mind is not pure or when one has studied without doing the other penances and control, he does not attain the knowledge of *Brahman*.

*Kevala Srotriya* is one who has mastered learning the scriptures word by word but has not attained oneness with *Brahman*. He can guide a student on the right path with his knowledge, but as he has not established oneness, he cannot entirely guide one to liberation. He will not be able to give the right emphasis on penances like control of mind and senses as he himself may not have achieved them. He can only teach about oneness from the scriptures and not from his experience.

#### *Kevala Brahmanishta*

*Brahmanishta* is a person who has attained oneness with *Brahman* either because of a pure mind or because of penance from many births. He may not have had a *guru* or formal training. Although he has achieved *Brahman*, he cannot guide others to liberation because he has had no formal training.

#### *Srotriya Brahmanishta*

A *srotriya Brahmanishta* is one who has learned the Vedas formally from a *guru* and has practised the teaching and undergone penance, and achieved union with *Brahman*. He is the best *guru* as he does not have the shortcomings of the other two *gurus*.



### **Adyarupa-apavada**

*Adyarupa* means superimposition, *apavada* means the removal of superimposition. *Adyarupa-apavada* is the method of superimposition and negation. It is the traditional method of teaching the Vedas.

In Vedanta, *adyarupa* is the superimposition of the world on *Brahman*, and *apavada* is refuting this notion by imparting knowledge. *Adyarupa* is accepting everything a student experiences as existing, like the world, the body, etc. *Apavada* is to negate the existence after imparting the knowledge. Essentially declaring that they are only ephemeral reality and not the Absolute reality.

An example would be accepting the superimposed snake on the rope as a

snake initially and after imparting knowledge removing the snake out of the rope and declaring that the rope is all there is.

For the *kevala Brahmanishta*, there is no snake, and for the *kevala srotriya*, there is no rope. Only a *srotriya Brahmanishta* will be able to accept the snake and show the rope.

#### **Guidelines for the teacher**

It is the duty of a teacher to teach the right students. The teacher teaches solely out of mercy for the students without any personal benefit for him. The teacher should not refuse the student who comes with the right attitude and qualifications. However, the teacher also has rules to teach:

- The students should request for the knowledge. The teacher should not teach when not asked for.
- Even when requested, the student should have the qualifications to receive the knowledge.

Only when both the above conditions are met should the teacher teach that student.

#### **The unqualified student**

Once a student with an impure mind approached a teacher and requested that he be taught the transcendental knowledge. The teacher said, *purify your mind and come back for learning*. But the student demanded he be taught. The teacher took a dirty plate and asked the student to serve him food. The student hesitated and said, *the plate is dirty. If I serve you on this plate, the food will spoil*. The teacher said, *your mind is impure. If I teach you, the knowledge will get corrupted*.

#### **The right attitude for a student**

The attitude and the attributes with which a student should approach a teacher includes:

- Prostration
- Service
- Inquiry

**Prostration:** The student should prostrate in front of the teacher. This is done to surrender completely to the teacher and accept his teachings.

A student comes to a teacher frustrated, as a *samsari*. The teacher imparts the knowledge that he is *Brahman* — *anandarupa* (bliss), which is in contrast to the student's experience. The student can accept this only out of faith in the teacher. He sees the result of the knowledge in the teacher who is devoid of attachment, desire, and anger. Until the student attains this knowledge, he can only learn by having faith in the teacher. Therefore, surrendering is an important attitude for the student.

*The guru is Brahma (the creator), the guru is Vishnu (the preserver), the guru is Lord Maheshwara (the destroyer). The guru is verily that supreme Brahman, and I prostrate to that guru.*

- Widely sung by Adi Shankara

**Service:** A student should share a close relationship with his teacher and serve the teacher wherever he can. This serves as *karma yoga* for the evolving student and helps him attain purity of mind and faster spiritual growth.

**Inquiry:** A student should always ask the teacher and be inquisitive about the teaching. He should discuss the teachings and when in doubt, address them respectfully.



The Right Attitude of the Student



## Verse 34

Lord Krishna said,

*Acquire this knowledge by prostrating, inquiring and serving the spiritual master. The Self-realized learned will instruct you in that knowledge.* 4.34

Instructing on how to attain the knowledge of Self and from whom, Lord Krishna reveals the result of obtaining the knowledge.

### The fruits of the Supreme knowledge

The Supreme knowledge removes:

- Delusion
- Sins
- Fruits of action

**Delusion:** The knowledge of the Self removes the delusion of multiplicity. We identify ourselves as a separate entity from other beings because of ignorance. When one attains the knowledge of *Brahman*, there is no dualism. On attaining *Brahman*, we see all the beings in ourselves and ourselves in *Brahman*. The wall of separation from one another, including *Brahman*, is removed, and there is no falling back.

This awakening to the oneness is like waking up from a dream. The awakened dreamer knows that all beings in his dream were his own projection and not separate external entities.

The knowledge also removes the delusion about the Soul and the non-soul (the permanent and the transient).

**Sins:** Lord Krishna says irrespective of how much one has sinned in the past, the knowledge about the Self removes them all.

### How does knowledge remove all sins?

Through knowledge, one knows that he is not the doer or reaper of any action. It removes the ego. One is no longer the performer of any actions but is the witness.

When the ego is removed from the action, one does not experience the fruits of the action. For example, when one sins in his dream, he is not bound by them when he wakes up. Similarly, when awakened to the Self, the sins do not bind one.

After attaining knowledge, one is no longer the person he was. It is a rebirth, the birth which does not have a death.

### Buddha visits his wife

After enlightenment, Buddha chose to visit his wife, whom he left behind one night in search of peace. After crying out the twelve years of anger, she said to Buddha, *you could have told me you wanted to go, I would have happily granted you your wish. What was the need to leave the palace in the middle of the night like a thief causing me so much pain?* Buddha replied, holding his composure, *the person who left you behind wasn't me. I am sure that person must have realized*



*he had sinned and repented it.*

**Fruits of action:** Any action one performs has consequences. It brings one merit or demerit based on the motive. There are three types of **karma**:

1. **Sanchita karma** - the sum total of all actions done by one during all his previous births.
2. **Prarabdha karma** - the part of **sanchita karma**, which is to be experienced in the current incarnation.
3. **Agami karma** - the newly created **karma** which will affect the future.

**Sanchita karma** can never be exhausted by experiencing them because while experiencing **prarabdha karma**, **agami karma** is created. When the **prarabdha karma** finishes for that incarnation, the **agami karma** joins the **sanchita karma**. This keeps the **samsara chakra** (the wheel of **samsara**) going.

Liberation breaks the cycle by destroying both the **sanchita karma** and **agami karma** for the Self-realized.

After attaining knowledge, one's actions do not yield any fruits. They do not collect merits or demerits. Knowledge destroys both **sanchita karma** and **agami karma**. However, knowledge will not destroy **prarabdha karma**.

**Why is **prarabdha karma** not destroyed by knowledge?**

Being alive does not mean being in **samsara**. **Prarabdha** only gives one the circumstances, not **samsara**. How one takes the situation is solely upon him. **Prarabdha** itself is not the cause of sorrow or **samsara**.

**Prarabdha karma** helps one receive the body by which one acquires knowledge, and so the knowledge does not destroy the **prarabdha karma**. Also, if one leaves the body after attaining the knowledge, there will be no teachers to help others on this path.

Lord Krishna says knowledge removes all **karmas**. This has to be understood as it removes all the merits and demerits of one. The wise leaves the gross body once his **prarabdha karma** is finished and does not have to be born again, as his **sanchita karma** and **agami karma** are destroyed.

#### The Fruits of Knowledge

Removes delusion	Removes sins	Removes fruits of actions
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## Verses 35 – 37

Lord Krishna said,

*On attaining knowledge, you will not be deluded again. Through this, you will perceive all beings in your own Self and also in Me.* 4.35

*Even if you are the most sinful of all sinners, you will cross the ocean of sins by the raft of knowledge.* 4.36

*As the blazing fire renders wood to ashes, so does the fire of knowledge reduce all actions to ashes.* 4.37

Having said how to obtain knowledge and its fruits, Lord Krishna talks about the glory of knowledge.

The Vedas mention several sacrifices like charity, penance, and fasting to purify one. Charity removes greed and fasting removes impurities like anger and desire. However, Lord Krishna says knowledge is the greatest purifier.

**How is knowledge the greatest purifier of all?**

Every other sacrifice removes only one's demerits or adds merits for one. According to Vedanta, even merits are impurities. Through merits, one does not attain liberation but just comfortable rebirths. Only knowledge destroys merits also. After attaining knowledge, the action of one does not collect merits or demerits. Therefore, knowledge is the ultimate purifier.

**Knowledge only shows what is already there. It is not an action. How, then, can knowledge remove impurities?**

It is often mentioned in the scriptures that *jnana bodaka na karaka*. *Jnana* means knowledge, *bodaka* means the awakener, and *na karaka* means not a reason for an action. We know knowledge removes ignorance. When ignorance is removed, it removes all the attributes of ignorance. Ignorance is the reason one identifies with one's ego instead of the Soul. And the identification with ego makes him a doer. This brings him merits and demerits. And when ignorance is removed, ego and the fruits of actions are also removed. Knowledge removes the impurities along with its root cause.

Even after studying the scriptures for many years, a lot of people do not understand the glory of knowledge. Lord Krishna says one gets access to the knowledge of the Self after perfecting *karma yoga* and meditation through constant practice.

**Conditions to attain knowledge**

Lord Krishna states that one must have the below attitude to attain knowledge:

1. Faith (*Shraddha*):
2. Devotion (*Tatparata*):
3. Sense-control (*Samyatendriyah*):

**Faith (*Shraddha*):** Faith is important, for only with faith any information becomes knowledge. In general, we attain knowledge of an object with the help of our perception. In these cases, faith is not a prerequisite to attaining knowledge. For example, when a teacher shows a tree and says, *this is a tree*, we can see the tree to confirm the information. Our sight helps convert that information into knowledge. But when the scriptures say we are *Brahman*, we are unable to perceive that information through any senses. *Brahman*, defined as *Satchitananda* (*sat* means true, *chit*-consciousness, *ananda*-bliss), is contrary to one's experience as a *samsari*.

*I am of the nature of consciousness.*

*I am made of consciousness and bliss.*

*I am nondual, pure in form, absolute knowledge, absolute love.*

*I am changeless, devoid of desire or anger, I am detached.*

*I am One Essence, unlimitedness, utter Consciousness.*

*I am boundless Bliss, existence and transcendent Bliss.*

*I am the *Atman*, that revels in itself.*

*I am the *Satchidananda* that is eternal, enlightened and pure.*

— Tejobindu Upanishad, 3.1-3.12 (Abridged)

A student comes to a teacher as a sufferer, frustrated in *samsara* (the cycle of death and rebirth). He is unable to see himself as that blissful *Brahman*. When his perception and experience do not support the teaching, faith in the teacher is the

only reason he pursues it. When there is no way to evaluate the information, faith in the teacher is required until the information becomes knowledge.

### What is the right kind of faith?

Some students come to the teacher with some information on the subject. When the discussion is in tune with their ideas, they understand and accept it easily. When the ideas are contradictory, based on the students' faith in the teacher, the students might blindly accept them or completely reject them. There are three types of faith:

- **Kushraddha** (blind faith): Accepting anything the teacher says without questioning, even when it appears to contradict the student's understanding, is blind faith.
- **Shraddha** (faith): Honouring and accepting the teaching in full faith. Questioning the teacher with respect when in doubt to understand correctly is the right kind of faith.
- **Ashraddha** (non-faith): Having no faith in the teacher or his teachings.

Faith does not mean accepting everything the teacher says without clarity. It is often confused with blind faith. When in doubt, the student should question the teacher to get clarity. Questioning is a display of faith in the teacher.

**Devotion (*Tatparata*)**: Knowledge cannot be attained without devotion and full commitment. Our entire focus should be around attaining knowledge.

**Sense-control (*Samyatendriyah*)**: Lord Krishna emphasis on control of the sense organs as one of the conditions to attain knowledge. Not having control of oneself is like riding a horse without the blinder. One has very little control over his course of actions.

With the three conditions mentioned, one attains knowledge very soon, which leads to peace immediately.



### Hindrances to knowledge

The three main hindrances to knowledge are:

1. Ignorance
2. Lack of faith
3. Doubt

**Ignorance**: Many are ignorant about the existence of Soul itself. And many more are ignorant of their ignorance also. The five steps a student undergoes when learning about the Soul are:

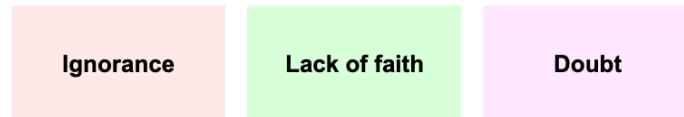
1. A student at the beginning of the spiritual journey is ignorant of the Soul.
2. With some learning, he becomes doubtful whether or not there is Soul.
3. On learning further, he becomes more certain and less doubtful about the existence of the Soul.
4. With more learning, he becomes certain about the existence of the Soul.
5. Finally, he establishes with the Soul, and the goal of the learning is achieved.

The one who is ignorant of his ignorance will not even reach out for knowledge. Ignorance is a hindrance.

**Lack of faith**: The Soul cannot be perceived by our senses and be understood. Faith in the teacher is therefore required until one establishes with the Self.

**Doubt:** Those who are doubtful about everything, even though are not ignorant and have faith in the teacher, will not attain knowledge. Suspicion is considered the worst of all hindrances. Not just knowledge, Lord Krishna says, the doubtful ones will not even make efforts to achieve material well-being in this world.

#### Hindrances to Attaining Knowledge

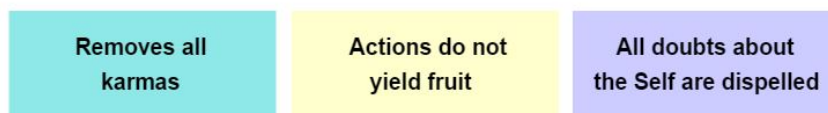


#### The benefits of attaining knowledge

Lord Krishna concludes this chapter by discussing the benefits of knowledge:

1. After attaining the knowledge of Self, all the *karmas* are destroyed.
2. Actions do not bind him, who has renounced actions through the knowledge of *jnana karma sannyasa*.
3. All his doubts about the Self are dispelled with knowledge.

#### The Benefits of Attaining Knowledge



## Verses 38 – 42

Lord Krishna said,

*There is no purification better than Knowledge. One who has become perfect in *yoga* finds this knowledge within him in due course of time.* 4.38

*Only a devoted, faithful and sense-subdued person attains this knowledge. Having obtained knowledge, he attains peace at once.* 4.39

*The ignorant, faithless and doubting are doomed to destruction. For the sceptic, there is neither well-being in this world or the next, nor is there happiness for him.* 4.40

*Actions do not bind those who have renounced actions in *yoga*, whose doubts have been dispelled by knowledge, and who are established in the Self.* 4.41

*Therefore, with the sword of knowledge slash all the doubts in your heart that are born out of ignorance. Take refuge in *yoga* and arise for the battle.* 4.42



Aum Tat Sat

# Summary

## Part I - Avatar

- *Avatar* means descent. An *avatar* usually refers to the embodiment or manifestation of God.
- An *avatar* is a force that is hidden when the world is functioning according to *dharm* (righteousness) and appears when the flow is disrupted. The force then removes the reason for the destruction and restores harmony, and disappears again.
- One's own merits and demerits that are responsible for one's birth is called individual *karma*.
- Others' *karma* responsible for one's birth so that they can transact with him as a part of their *karma* is called collective *karma*.
- Both these *karmas* are required and responsible for one's birth.
- The *avatars* do not have individual *karma*. They take form because of the collective *karma* of the others.
- An *avatar* is pure consciousness.
- The two powers of *maya* that delude everyone are: The power of concealment and the power of projection.
- The humans experience both the powers of *maya*.
- An *avatar* who has *maya* under its control only experiences *maya's* power of projection.
- Righteousness is protected by protecting the righteous people and destroying the unrighteous.
- *Karma* can be created and experienced only through a gross body. When the gross body is not available, actions cannot be performed.
- One on the unrighteous path cannot perform any bad deeds if his gross body is not available to him. An *avatar* descends to destroy such bodies.

## Part II – The Path to Liberation

- One cannot attain and establish with the Supreme knowledge without eliminating these three hindrances: attachment, fear and anger.
- If one asks for material well-being, God cherishes him with material well-being. If one asks for purity of mind, he is granted that. If one asks for liberation, he will be liberated. But one cannot ask for both material pleasure and liberation because the path to liberation is only through renunciation.
- Human society is divided into four different castes based on one's role in society. The four castes are:
- *Brahmins*: The *brahmins* are the priest of the temples. They are learned and scholarly who take up teaching.
- *Kshatriyas*: The *kshatriyas* are the rulers, warriors or administrators.
- *Vaishyas*: The *vaishyas* are agriculturalists or merchants.
- *Shudras*: The *shudras* are the labourers or the service providers.
- Lord Krishna says He created the fourfold caste based on *guna* and *karma*.
- The one with the predominant *sattva guna* followed by *rajas guna* and then *tamas guna* is a *brahmin*.
- The one with the predominant *rajas guna* followed by *sattva guna* and then by *tamas guna* is a *kshatriya*.
- The one with the predominant *rajas guna* followed by *tamas guna* and then

- by *sattva guna* is a *vaishya*.
- The one with the predominant *tamas guna* followed by *rajas guna* and then by *sattva guna* is a *shudra*.
- By *guna*, everyone has the choice to become the highest *brahmin*.
- Only the one with the *guna* of a *brahmin* can attain liberation. Liberation is attained purely based on qualification and not by one's birth or his job (*karma*). A predominant *sattva guna* is required in one to attain knowledge and retain it.
- Lord Krishna, having said He created these castes based on one's *guna* and *karma*, tells Arjuna to understand Him as a non-doer. This should be looked at from two standpoints:
- When Lord Krishna says He created the four castes, He talks about creating them along with *maya*.
- When Lord Krishna says He did not do it. He talks about his real Self, which is *Brahman*, which is a non-doer and a non-reaper.
- Actions do not bind Him because: He does not desire the result of the action. He knows He is *Brahman*; He is not the doer; He is the witness.
- Lord Krishna asks Arjuna to perform his duties like the other *mumukshus* (the ones yearning for liberation) before him, for they have had the knowledge which did not bind their actions. They did actions for two reasons: To attain purity of mind in preparation for liberation. After liberation, for *lokasamgraha* (for the welfare of the world), if they had the *prarabdha* for it.

### Part III - Jnana Karma Sannyasa

- The Soul is pure consciousness and is only a witness that will never perform any actions. The body is action-oriented (*karma svarupa*). The body is pushed into action because of the three *gunas*. Actions are the functions of the *gunas*. The Soul is not made of the *gunas* and, therefore, will not perform any actions.
- The body and the mind made of the *gunas* cannot be devoid of actions. Even when they rest or appear to be in complete inaction, their nature is action. They are *karma svarupa* (action-oriented).
- Understand that as long as you are in a body, there is action. Liberation is not the lack of action, for that is not possible. Find peace within your thoughts and actions.
- The body and the mind that perform actions will reap the results of their actions. The Soul is neither a doer nor a reaper.
- Kriya karaka phalarupa jagat*. *Kriya* means *karma* (action), *karaka* means reason, *phala* means fruits, *rupa* means form and *jagat* means the world.
- Kriya karaka phalarupa jagat* means the world is in the form of reason, action, and fruits.
- The reason for an action is *karaka*.
- The different reasons for the action (*karakas*) are: Doer (*karta*), Object (*karman*), Instrument (*karana*), For (*sampradana*), From (*apadana*), On (*adikarana*). If none of the six reasons are present, there will be no action.
- When the wise performs an action, they consider themselves and the action as *Brahman*. There is non-duality. And in non-duality, there is no reason (*karaka*), and, therefore, their actions do not yield fruits.

### Part IV -The Sacrifices

- Lord Krishna suggests twelve sacrifices (*yajna*) which will lead one



steadily on the path to liberation.

- Eleven among them lead the seeker to the knowledge. The twelfth *yajna* is knowledge itself. Knowledge is the final sacrifice which leads one to liberation.
- *Deva yajna* is the ritualistic sacrifice done as a worship of the demigods (divine beings). This sacrifice is performed to bring the sacrificial attitude in one towards God.
- The sacrifice of the self in *Brahman* is called *Brahman yajna*. This sacrifice is performed by the ones who desire liberation.
- *Dama yajna* is control of senses.
- *Vishaya grahana* means absorbing. Absorbing good things itself is a *yajna*. To see, hear and learn good things requires a lot of willpower. Choosing the good over instant gratification is discipline and is a sacrifice too.
- *Sama yajna* is the *yajna* of mind control
- *Dravya yajna* means charity. Distribution of wealth, knowledge, affection, kindness, essentially anything that is given away without expecting returns is *dravya yajna*.
- *Tapas* can be translated as penance and self-discipline. *Tapas* is any practice that does not enslave us to our senses. Doing one's duty is *tapas* in *karma yoga*, and meditation is *tapas* in *jnana yoga*. Various types of fasting and other self-denial practices are also *tapas*. Penance strengthens one spiritually.
- The *yoga yajna* in the Gita refers to Patanjali's *ashtanga yoga*.
- *Swadhyaya yajna* is the *yajna* of learning.
- *Jnana yajna* is grasping the meaning of the verses learned. Listening to the teaching, contemplating and meditation on that which was thought.
- *Pranayama* is the *yajna* of breath.
- *Ahara niyama yajna* is the *yajna* of food.
- *Jnana yajna*, the *yajna* of knowledge, is considered the greatest of the sacrifices.

## Part V- The **Guru**

- The knowledge of Self must only be attained from a *guru*. A *guru* is often translated as a teacher, but a *guru* is much more than that. A *guru* is an exemplar who imparts values and knowledge and a guide who helps realize one's Soul.
- To teach the Vedas, the *guru* should have these qualifications: the complete knowledge of *Brahman* and achieved oneness with *Brahman*.
- Types of *gurus*: *Kevala srotriya*, *Kevala Brahmanishta*, *Srotriya Brahmanishta*
- A *srotriya Brahmanishta* is one who has learned the Vedas formally from a *guru* and has practised the teaching and undergone penance and achieved union with *Brahman*. He is the best *guru*.
- The attitude and the attributes with which a student should approach a teacher should include prostration, service, and inquiry.
- The Supreme knowledge removes delusion, sins, and fruits of action.
- Lord Krishna states three conditions to attain knowledge: faith, devotion, sense-control.
- The three main hindrances in the path of attaining knowledge are ignorance, lack of faith, and doubt.
- Lord Krishna concludes this chapter by talking about the benefits of



knowledge. The three benefits of attaining the knowledge: After attaining the knowledge of Self, all the *karmas* are destroyed. Actions do not bind him, who has renounced actions through the knowledge of *jnana karma sannyasa*. All his doubts about Self are dispelled because of the knowledge.

# Chapter 5

## Karma-Sannyasa Yoga



This chapter begins with Arjuna asking Lord Krishna which is superior — the path of action or the path of renunciation. In reply to Arjuna, Lord Krishna talks about renunciants, when and why one can renounce and take up asceticism. He compares both the paths and advocates Arjuna to follow the path of action and why it is beneficial to him and most others. He also says that both paths lead to the same goal and discusses how they do.



## Part I

# Sannyasa

*Sannyasa* means to throw away or leave everything behind for certain. *Sannyasa* is the complete renunciation of worldly life and can be translated as asceticism. It is also the fourth and final *ashram*.

The Vedas divide a person's life into four stages. They are called *ashrams*. There are specific duties for each stage of one's life. The four *ashrams* are *brahmacharya* (student), *grihastha* (householder), *vanaprastha* (retired), and *sannyasa* (ascetic).

### Reasons for taking up *sannyasa*

The two main reasons for taking up *sannyasa* are:

1. To attain liberation
2. To attain knowledge.

**To attain liberation:** If one has already attained the knowledge of the Self in any of the above lifestyles (*ashrams*), he can take up *sannyasa* to continue the path to attain liberation.

**To attain knowledge:** If one has already renounced the world and does not see a point in achieving transient happiness, he could take up *sannyasa* to attain the knowledge of the Self and, finally, liberation.

### Types of *sannyasa*

Based on the reason one has taken up *sannyasa*, there are two types of *sannyasa*. They are:

1. *Vidvat Sannyasa*
2. *Vividisha Sannyasa*

***Vidvat Sannyasa:*** *Vidvat sannyasa* is taken up by those who have attained knowledge. *Vidvat sannyasa* can be taken up from any of the three lifestyles (*ashrams*) — student, householder, or retired, as knowledge, can be attained in any lifestyle. Certain lifestyles help certain *yoga*. For example, it is easy for a householder to perform *karma yoga* than those in other lifestyles, and *jnana yoga* is easier for an ascetic than any other. However, lifestyle alone will not bring the results of *yoga*. Irrespective of the lifestyle, if one attains the knowledge of the Self, he can take up *sannyasa*. The main reasons for taking up *vidvat sannyasa* are:

- To establish with the knowledge attained.
- If one's *prarabdha* dictates so.

### To establish with the knowledge attained

It is very difficult to attain steadfastness in the knowledge of the Self in any other lifestyle other than the ascetic lifestyle. It is easier to attain union with knowledge if one has fewer worldly interactions. While interacting with the world, especially with other humans, one uses one's ego. A calmer place helps one meditate and contemplate better. Seclusion is better for *nididhyasana* (*nididhyasana* is meditating. One must meditate until the knower and the known becomes the same.)

### If one's *prarabdha* dictates so

*Prarabdha karma* is the *karma* that is to be experienced in the current incarnation. Those who have attained knowledge and union with *Brahman* do not have anything

further to achieve. However, if their *prarabdha karma* is more supportive of taking up *sannyasa*, they will.

*Vidvat sannyasa* is not a penance but is the result of the knowledge attained. According to the scriptures, one can leave all his duties behind when he takes up *sannyasa* after attaining the knowledge of the Self. There are no rules for this *yogi*.

***Vividisha sannyasa:*** *Vividisha sannyasa* is taken up by those frustrated in *samsara* and have renounced the world. They may not have attained the knowledge of the Self but have renounced everything completely and are in search of knowledge.

One can take up *vividisha sannyasa* when one is certain that he has renounced the worldly pleasure and will not long for them again. The renunciant may also take up *sannyasa* to protect his renunciation while attaining knowledge. One could slip back into materialism if there is constant interaction with the world, especially with worldly people. The main reasons for taking up *vividisha sannyasa* are:

- To attain the knowledge of the Self
- To protect one's renunciation

**To attain the knowledge of Self:** Though the knowledge of the Self can be attained in any lifestyle, some choose *sannyasa ashram* as there is much more peace and calmness in this lifestyle. It is possible that some people may not be able to get peace of mind from where they are and in the midst of what they do. Therefore, they take up asceticism in the hope of attaining a pure and peaceful mind.

**To protect one's renunciation:** Some reach a stage in life where none of the worldly indulgence (*bhoga*) gives them pleasure anymore. They have renounced, and to protect their renunciation and to attain purity of mind by controlling the senses and the mind, they take up asceticism to attain knowledge. This kind of asceticism is penance. The aim of *vividisha sannyasa* is to become a *vidvat sannyasi*.

*Vividisha sannyasa*, unlike *vidvat sannyasa*, is not free of rules. These ascetics have duties and rules they must abide by. Renunciation is mandatory for any *sannyasa*, however.

Lord Krishna concluded the previous chapter by glorifying the sage in the path of return (*nivritti marg*). He talked about *vidvat sannyasa* and the benefits of being one. However, Arjuna, uncertain of what he must follow, asks Lord Krishna what he must do.

Vidvat Sannyasa	Vividisha Sannyasa
It is taking up sannyasa after attaining knowledge.	It is taking up sannyasa before attaining knowledge.
There are no rules or duties in this sannyasa.	There are rules and duties in this sannyasa.
A vidvat sannyasi has renounced completely.	A vividisha sannyasi has renounced completely.
A vidvat sannyasa is not a penance, it is the result of the knowledge attained.	A vividisha sannyasa is a penance to attain vidvat sannyasa.
Reasons for Taking up Sannyasa	
To establish with the knowledge attained.	To attain knowledge
If one's prarabdha dictates so.	To protect one's renunciation.

## Verse 1

Arjuna said,

*You praised the path of renunciation, and You also advised the path of **karma yoga**. Tell me for certain which is more beneficial. 5.1*

This question is not whether *vidvat sannyasa* is superior to *karma yoga* but rather if *vividisha sannyasa* is superior to *karma yoga*. Is it better if one takes up *sannyasa* before attaining knowledge or performing *karma yoga*?

### ***Karma yoga or vividisha sannyasa***

Lord Krishna says *karma yoga* and *sannyasa* both lead to liberation. A person, however, should take up what suits him most, not what is superior. Renouncing is not easy. In general, renunciation comes as the result of crossing all four *ashramas* (lifestyles). Usually, renunciation is the result of *karma yoga*.

### ***Karma yoga is better for most***

Most people may not have renounced when they begin their spiritual journey, so entering *sannyasa* directly is an exception and not an ideal path for all. In general, it is better, to begin with *karma yoga*.

For *sannyasa*, renunciation is a prerequisite. Though one may think he has renounced, his desires or his *samskaras* (mental imprints) may surface again. After taking up *vividisha sannyasa*, if one is still attached and has desires in his mind, he cannot experience them. He will become a self-deluded person (*mithyachara*). This is why many ascetics are unable to keep up their vows and slip from their spiritual goals. They may have taken up asceticism due to some calling but have not attained perfection for it.

But one on the path of *karma yoga* can experience his desires righteously. He is in a situation to clean all these impurities and purify himself while experiencing his desires righteously. Performing *karma yoga* until one can attain purity of mind is necessary for spiritual progress. *Karma yoga* is a safe path in which one experiences all his desires righteously, understands their transient nature, and slowly leaves them. One must perform *karma yoga* until he is certain that he has renounced completely.

On renouncing for certain, there will no longer be any confusion as to which path one must take. He will know what is more beneficial for him. Arjuna has not renounced completely and, therefore, the question.

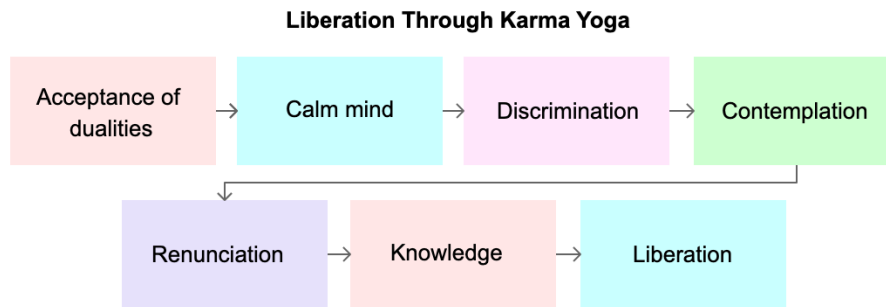
### ***Karma yogi is a nitya sannyasi***

Lord Krishna calls *karma yogi* a *nitya sannyasi*. *Nitya* means always. A *karma yogi* is a perpetual *sannyasi*. Performing *karma yoga* is being in a state of equipoise. There are neither likes nor dislikes; there is no loss or gain, no honour or dishonour, no praise or censure, no joy or sorry. When one is free from dualities, his actions do not bind him. Only actions done with motives bind one; actions performed as *karma yoga* will not.

Dualities are the reason for the turbulence of the mind. When in sorrow or joy, the mind is agitated. Only a calm mind is capable of clear thoughts. The calm mind searches for the truth. The discrimination capability can only be built under stillness. The mind that is caught up in worldly affairs will not be able to think about the truth beyond.

Accepting the duality with an equipoised mind results in a calm mind. The calm mind discriminates between the transient and the permanent. Discrimination leads to contemplation. Contemplation leads to renunciation. Having renounced, one is ready for knowledge (*jnana yoga*), which leads to liberation. The path is long, but it begins

with *karma yoga*.



### The result of *karma yoga* and *sannyasa* are the same

One can attain liberation irrespective of the lifestyle, and *sannyasa* is just a lifestyle, not a goal.

#### The path of the *karma yogi*

A *karma yogi* performs his duties, and by doing his duty and maintaining equipoise, he attains purity of mind, with pure mind, knowledge and with knowledge, liberation.

#### The path of *sannyasi*

One who has taken *sannyasa* for knowledge (*vividisha sannyasa*) has a set of duties and conditions he must abide by. He has duties towards his teacher and the place he resides in, which he must fulfil. He will attain purity of mind by performing these duties with pure mind, knowledge and with knowledge, liberation.

Both the *sannyasi* and the *karma yogi* must attain purity of mind to attain knowledge. The steps are the same, and so is the goal.

Lord Krishna says only for the ignorant, the result of *karma yoga* and *sannyasa* looks different. The wise have always known that they both yield the same results. By perfecting either, one certainly attains the result of both. However, if one feels burdened by his duties, his attitude towards his duties is not correct. If the duties are not performed well, they will not yield any results. Everyone must perform their duties until they attain the knowledge of the Self. Everyone's duties are the manifestations of their *prarabdha karma*, and so irrespective of how trivial they may be, they must be performed with perfection.

## Verses 2 – 5

Lord Krishna said,

*Both renunciation of action and the path of selfless action lead one to the highest good, yet know that the path of selfless action is superior to the renunciation of action. 5.2*

*Know that the one free from attraction and aversion and the other dualities as the truly renounced. Though performing actions, he is set free from bondage. 5.3*

*Children, not the wise, consider the path of renunciation and the path of selfless action as separate. He who is truly established in either obtains the fruits of both. 5.4*

*The state reached by the renunciation of action is also reached by the path of selfless action. One who sees the two paths as one truly sees. 5.5*



## **Sannyasi**

A **sannyasi's** only goal is liberation, which is not easy. As it is the path of renunciation of actions, many think it is easy. There may not be a worldly duty, but **sannyasa** has a lot of duties and control.

*These are the vows a **sannyasi** must keep – Abstention from injuring living beings, truthfulness, abstention from appropriating others' property, abstention from sex, and liberality (kindness, gentleness) are the major vows. There are five minor vows: abstention from anger, obedience towards the **guru**, avoidance of rashness, cleanliness, and purity in eating. He should beg (for food) without annoying others; any food he gets, he must compassionately share a portion with other living beings. Sprinkling the remainder with water, he should eat as if it were medicine.*

—Baudhayana, Dharmasutra, II.10.18.1-10

### **Who is qualified for **sannyasa**?**

Many people think anyone who does not like to work or cannot work due to mental or physical conditions resorts to **sannyasa**. This is not correct. To become a **sannyasi**, there are qualifications. One is allowed to take up **sannyasa** only if he qualifies for at least one of the below:

1. The person has attained the knowledge of the Self.
2. The person has completely renounced everything for certain.

The scriptures declare that anyone who has achieved either of the two can take up **sannyasa** right away, irrespective of age, caste, gender, or lifestyle. Once a person attains knowledge or renunciation, no one has the right to stop him/her from taking up **sannyasa**.

#### **Qualification for Sannyasa**

Sannyasa	Qualification
Vidvat Sannyasa	Knowledge of Self
Vividisha Sannyasa	Complete Renunciation

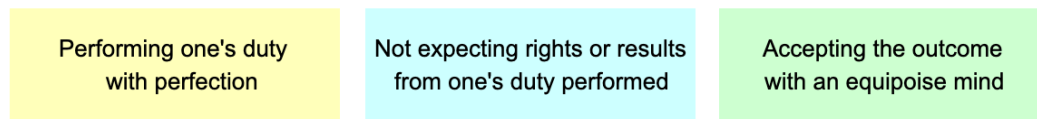
### **Sannyasa, through **karma yoga****

**Sannyasa** cannot be attained without performing **karma yoga**. In rare cases, one may enter **sannyasa** directly after the **brahmacharya ashram** (from being a student) without doing **karma yoga** or having the need to do it. According to the scriptures, this is an exception. In rare cases, one might be born with perfection for knowledge, having attained purity of mind through penances, austerities and **karma yoga** performed in several incarnations. However, for others, **karma yoga** is the only path. Having emphasized **karma yoga**, Lord Krishna consolidates **karma yoga**:

- **Karma yoga** is doing one's duty with perfection, irrespective of how trivial one's duty might be.
- It is not expecting rights or results from one's duty performed.
- It is accepting the outcome of one's duty performed with an equipoised mind.

In short, **karma yoga** is righteous living, and righteous living purifies one's mind.

## Karma Yoga

**Instrument vs Goal**

Many are in delusion about their goals themselves and mistake instruments for goals. A pure mind, however, can discriminate instruments from goals. For instance, one's body and well-being are the instruments for a much greater goal and must not be mistaken for goals.

Through *karma yoga*, when one attains a pure mind, the goals become clear. Lord Krishna says the ultimate benefit of perfecting *karma yoga* is achieving oneness with all.

***Jnana karma sannyasa***

*Jnana karma sannyasa* is to see inaction in action and action in inaction. One must understand that the Soul is the witness to the body and the mind. The Soul never has and never will perform any actions. The body and the mind are action-oriented and will always remain in action as long as they exist. Actions will not bind him who knows this. Even though it seems like he performs actions, he does not.

**Walking through the river**

Vyasa, a great sage, was sitting on a riverbank. A few milkmaids with their dairy products wanted to cross the river. They did not see any boat to cross, and, knowing Vyasa was a great sage, they went to him for help. Vyasa said, *I shall help you, but first would you give me some milk and curd?* The ladies offered him. Having eaten them, he went up to the river and said, *if I have not eaten anything, part to let us through.* The ladies laughed at his request. Nevertheless, the river parted, and there was a passage to the other side.

Vyasa being a wise man, knew he was the Soul, separate from the body and the mind. The body performed the action of eating, not him. This is an exemplary story to remind us that we are not the body but the Soul.

**Verses 6 – 9**

Lord Krishna said,

*Mere renunciation of action without perfecting selfless action will bring one distress, but the wise who engage in selfless action quickly attain **Brahman**.*  
5.6

*For the one whose mind is purified by action and the senses conquered, for him who realizes his Self, as the Self of all beings, though performing actions, he is not tainted by them.* 5.7

*Being centered in the Self, the knower of the Truth thinks, 'I do nothing' — though seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping, breathing, speaking, letting go, holding, blinking. He is certain that it is the senses that move among the sense objects.* 5.8 -5.9

As Arjuna and many others do not have this knowledge, Lord Krishna emphasizes performing *karma yoga*.



## Part II

# Karma Yoga

## Perfect *karma yoga*

By now, one should know which path he must take to attain the greatest good. Without the knowledge of *jnana karma sannyasa*, one does not have the right to *sannyasa*. For all those who think the actions are performed by oneself, *karma yoga* is the only path.

With impurities in mind, irrespective of how much one learns, the learning will only stay as words and not become knowledge. The knowledge of the Self has been acquired by many and has been passed down for generations. Most people who had a chance to learn about the Self have learned it without understanding and only know them as words. It is believed that very rarely, when one with a pure mind acquires this knowledge, he attains liberation.

Actions do not impact if he is either a *jivanmukti* (one liberated while still alive) or a *karma yogi*. Lord Krishna compares a *karma yogi* to a lotus leaf. Even though a lotus leaf stays in the water, it is untouched by it. Similarly, a *karma yogi*, even while in action, is untouched by their fruits.

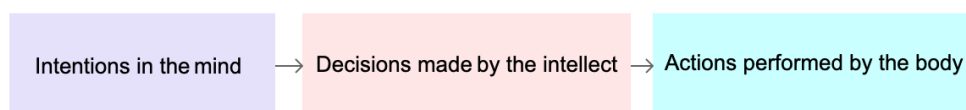
### How do actions occur?

For any action to occur, there are three steps involved:

1. Intentions made in the mind.
2. Decisions made by the intellect.
3. Action performed by the body.

Intentions or thoughts arise in the mind based on one's desires. One's likes and dislikes dictate his intentions. Based on the intentions that arise in the mind, the intellect decides whether or not to act. Eventually, the body acts if the decision taken is to work on the intentions.

#### Steps to Action



Another reason for the action is our association with the action. The thought, 'I am the doer', is another reason for the action one does.

*Karma yoga* removes these two reasons from the actions. Action, according to *karma yoga*, is:

- To perform actions based on one's duty rather than his likes and dislikes.
- Removing the "I" out of the actions.

### How do the desires arise?

The desire for an object arises from the knowledge of that object. Even if an object exists but if one does not know about it, one will not desire it. One does not desire what he does not know about.

Everybody has desires. However, one chooses to work only on those which are very compelling to him. This is where one's discrimination capabilities help one pursue

the right desires.

### **What is the purification of the mind?**

*Karma yoga* purifies one's mind. A mind that is occupied by different emotions like anger, greed, likes, and dislikes cannot be in peace. The discrimination capability will not be able to function well in an agitated mind. By performing *karma yoga*, one cleans off all these impurities and, as a result, attains a strong discrimination power.

With the discrimination of what is permanent and what is not, one's desire for knowledge and liberation increases. He will work towards fulfilling these. The desire for knowledge and liberation does not arise on its own for someone who is caught up in the material world. Only *karma yoga* will lead one to this desire. This is the biggest benefit of *karma yoga*.

Irrespective of how trivial one's work is, one attains peace by doing it perfectly without expecting results. The work does not matter, but the attitude behind it does.

### **Consequences of not performing *karma yoga***

*Karma yoga* essentially is righteous living. It is very tempting to attain more material gains in unrighteous ways quickly. We must understand that material well-being does not guarantee peace and security. One who does not live righteously might gain well materially, but there is no peace in living like that.

An unrighteous lifestyle will bring one sorrow and fade his discrimination capabilities further. This is the invisible consequence of unrighteous living; many choose this path to benefit faster materially, losing out on long-term goodness.

## **Verses 10 – 12**

Lord Krishna said,

*One who selflessly offers all his actions to **Brahman**, abandoning attachments, is not tainted by any sins. Like a lotus leaf that stays on the water yet is untouched by it. 5.10*

*By giving up attachment, the **karma yogis** perform actions only through the body, mind, intellect, and senses for the purification of the mind. 5.11*

*By renouncing the fruits of actions, one attains peace, but the one who works for fruits is bound by his actions. 5.12*

After emphasizing *karma yoga*, *Bhagavan* Krishna talks about the wise.



## Part III

# The Wise

### The enlightened

Having renounced using their intellectual capabilities, the wise can leave all the work behind and take up *sannyasa*. Every *ashram* has a set of rules and duties. For the wise, however, there is none.

The one who sees action in inaction and inaction in action treats his body as an instrument and is happily seated on it. Lord Krishna refers to the physical body as "the city of nine gates." The nine gates refer to the nine doors of the body: two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, a mouth, excretion and procreation organs. The liberated sits on his body as though residing in a temporary house. The wise think they have a body, while the ignorant think they are the body. The wise, with this knowledge, neither acts nor causes others to act.

*Karma yoga* is a means for development, but one should not stay in it entirely. Only performing *karma yoga* is a waste of birth. The ideal life goal is to perfect *karma yoga* to attain purity of mind and move on to *jnana yoga* (the *yoga* of knowledge) and strive for liberation within a lifetime.

Even if one must be among others involved in work due to *prarabdha karma*, he must use his intellect and discriminate between the permanent and transient and set the right goals.

Having talked about the wise Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that the Absolute (*Brahman*) does not create actions or the sense of doer-ship in one, nor does It bestow the fruits of action for one.

### *Ishvara*

*Ishvara* can be translated as God, while *Brahman* is translated as the Absolute Reality. *Ishvara* is the manifestation of *Brahman* along with *maya*. According to the sacred texts, *Ishvara* is the creator of all that there is and is the bestower of fruits for all actions.

### The characteristics of *Ishvara*

1. *Ishvara* is considered an embodiment of compassion.
2. *Ishvara* is one without attraction and aversion.
3. He (or she) is free of ignorance.
4. He is free of bondages.
5. He is free of ego.
6. He is a Self that is liberated.

According to *Advaita* Vedanta, *Ishvara's* real nature is existence, consciousness, and bliss, which is the same as an individual being. The oneness, however, is achieved only during liberation.

*Ishvara, I am.*

- Adi Shankara, Upadesasahasri 2.3.1, 2.10.8

### *Ishvara* in relation to *Brahman*

The Absolute (*Brahman*) can be further classified as

1. *Nirguna Brahman*
2. *Saguna Brahman*

***Nirguna Brahman:*** *Nirguna* means without any *gunas*. *Brahman* without any qualities or attributes to It is *Nirguna Brahman*. Often referred to as *Para Brahman*, the highest *Brahman* (*Para* meaning the highest). *Para Brahman* is considered formless, devoid of *maya*.

*Nirguna Brahman* is the non-dualistic state of being. The distinctions of one's Soul and *Brahman* are obliterated.

***Whoever realizes the Supreme Brahman attains supreme felicity.  
That Supreme Brahman is Eternal Truth (Satyam), Knowledge  
(Jnanam), Infinite (Anantam).***

-Taittiriya Upanishad 2.1.1

*Nirguna Brahman* is described as *satchidananda*, which means "truth, consciousness, and bliss." *Sat* means true, *cit* means consciousness, and *ananda* means bliss.

***The One is Bliss. Whoever perceives the Blissful One, the reservoir  
of pleasure, becomes blissful forever.***

-Taittiriya Upanishad 2.7.1-2

***Saguna Brahman:*** *Saguna* means qualities. It is often referred to as the manifested *Brahman*. *Brahman*, without any attributes, along with *maya* with its three *gunas*, is referred to as *Saguna Brahman*. *Ishvara* is *Saguna Brahman*. For example, Goddess Parvathi, God Shiva are *Saguna Brahman*.

*Ishvara* can be looked at in two ways, with a dominant *maya* — the creator and the bestower of the fruits of our actions. When *maya*, which is *mithya* (delusion), is removed from *Ishvara*, *Ishvara* is pure consciousness (*Brahmaswaroopa*), which is the same as *Atma*. *Brahman* is neither the creator of action nor the rewarder of its fruits.

The actions happen under the influence of *maya* (delusion). The Self performs all actions under *maya* — made up of the three *gunas* (*sattva* — awareness, *rajas* — passion, *tamas* — dullness) and regards itself as the actor and the reaper of the fruits of action. The Self under the control of *maya* is bound.

Nirguna Brahman	Saguna Brahman
Brahman without maya.	Brahman with maya.
Brahman without any attributes.	Brahman with attributes.
Unmanifested Brahman	Manifested Brahman
Para Brahman — Formless Brahman	Ishvara — Gods
Nirguna Brahman is Satchidananda — truth, consciousness, and bliss.	Saguna Brahman is the creator and the bestower of fruits of action.

Having said *Brahman* is not the reason for the fruits of action, Lord Krishna explains how ignorance causes delusion and explains the steps to remove ignorance.



## Ignorance

All beings are born under the influence of *maya*. Due to such births, everybody's intellect is covered by ignorance. Ignorance hides one's discrimination abilities. Knowledge is covered by ignorance. Therefore, all beings are deluded and think, "I am the doer" and "I am the reaper."

When the rope appears as a snake, the reason for seeing the snake is a delusion. The reason for not seeing the rope is ignorance. Ignorance is the reason, and delusion is the product. Because of ignorance, we all are in *samsara*, suffering.

If ignorance is removed with knowledge, we will attain *Brahman*. Ignorance is the only barrier between *Brahman* and us.

### The characteristics of ignorance

1. Ignorance does not have an origin. It was never created but always existed.
2. It can be destroyed by knowledge.
3. Ignorance has the capability to hide. It is like darkness. Though an object may exist, it cannot be seen. Truth cannot be seen because of Ignorance.
4. It is the cause of delusion.

Many do not know about the existence of the Soul. They are also ignorant of their ignorance and do not know why they suffer. Knowing one is suffering due to ignorance is already a big leap towards liberation.

#### Characteristics of Ignorance



### Knowledge removes ignorance

Knowledge removes ignorance and reveals *Para Brahman*. The Gita compares knowledge to the sun that removes the darkness. The steps to attain knowledge are:

1. Knowledge cannot shine through impurities. Impurities of the mind and intellect must be removed to gain knowledge of the Self.
2. Knowledge is achieved by first understanding *Brahman* using the intellect.
3. One must focus one's mind and intellect solely on *Brahman*.
4. One should establish a union with *Brahman*. It is not easy to establish this union. The *prarabdha karma* manifests as hurdles in one's path to liberation in the form of sorrow, joy, prosperity, and fame. These hindrances can delay and distract one from the path to liberation.

#### Steps to Attain Knowledge



After all the hardships, the one established in *Brahman* will not have to be born again. It is a state of no return.

## Verses 13 – 17

Lord Krishna said,

*Mentally renouncing all action, the self-controlled embodied being dwell happily in the city of nine gates, neither acting nor causing others to act. 5.13*

*The Lord does not create the sense of doer-ship or action in anyone, nor does He create the fruits of actions. It is the material nature that is responsible for all. 5.14*

*The Supreme God takes no account of anyone's merit or demerit. Knowledge is covered by ignorance, and so, all beings are deluded. 5.15*

*For those whose ignorance is destroyed by the Knowledge of the Self, their wisdom, like the Sun, reveals the Supreme. 5.16*

*Those whose intellect is fixed on Him, whose minds are absorbed in meditating on Him, those who abide Him, and whose goals are fixed on attaining Him quickly reach the state from which there is no return. Their sins are perished by knowledge. 5.17*



## Part IV

# All is *Brahman*

### The sage's outlook on the world

There are two ways one sees the objects of the world:

1. Through the eyes
2. Through the intellect

The eyes always show us the objects as they are. The intellect, however, understands what is shown and discriminates the objects. For instance, the eyes show us the person. The intellect discriminates whether we know the person or not. The eyes themselves do not have the ability to discriminate the objects. There are two ways one's intellect sees an object:

1. *Namarupa drishti*
2. *Swaroopo drishti*

***Namarupa drishti:*** *Drishti* can be translated as sight (a view). *Namarupa drishti* is seeing an object as it appears — the form or only the object's physical appearance. For instance, seeing a pot as a pot and not as clay is *namarupa drishti*.

***Swaroopo drishti:*** *Swaroopo drishti* is seeing the real nature of the object. For instance, seeing a pot as clay and not as a pot is *swaroopo drishti*.

The wise sacrifice the forms (*namarupa*) of the objects (or people) by knowing it is a delusion (*mithya*) and temporary (*anitya*). He views the world with the *swaroopo drishti*.

The world comprises of three *gunas*, which is *maya*, which is *mithya* (delusion). These three *gunas* are imposed on *Brahman*. All the forms (*namarupa*) in *Brahman* are because of the three *gunas*.

*Maya* is very attractive, and when we see the world with the *gunas*, it is also very attractive. The forms are attractive to the sense organs and the mind. By losing control over the forms of objects, we meet the consequence of them, which is *samsara*. A wise, however, differentiates *Brahman* from the *gunas* and does not interact with *maya*.

A sage sees everything as the same, not by his eyes but by his intellect. Though his eyes show him the form, the intellect knows they are *Brahman*.

Lord Krishna says there is no difference between a humble *brahmin*, a cow, an elephant, a dog, or a dog eater for a sage.

**A humble *brahmin*:** In general, acquiring anything like wealth or fame makes one proud of oneself, and when they leave, the pride also leaves. However, knowledge, once acquired, does not leave one. Therefore, the one who possesses knowledge might have much more pride. A *brahmin* who has acquired knowledge but does not have pride denotes pure *sattva guna*.

*It cannot be stolen by thieves, nor can it be taken away by kings.*

*It cannot be divided among brothers; it does not cause a load on  
your shoulders.*

*If spent, it indeed always keeps growing.*

***The wealth of knowledge is the most superior wealth of all!***

**- An Ancient saying**

A cow and its products (milk, ghee) is *sattvic*. An elephant is an animal with predominant *rajas guna*. A dog and a dog eater are a representation of ignorance with predominant *tamas guna*.

If one sees them all alike, it denotes that irrespective of their *gunas*, one can see the *Brahman* in them all, which is the same.

For this sage, the *Brahman* is *satya* (truth), and the *jagat* (the world) is *mithya* (delusion). The *Brahman* is real, and its manifestations are a delusion. The manifestations are only ephemeral.

### **Shankaracharya and the chandala**



Shankaracharya (an eighth-century monk) preached and practised non-duality (*Advaita*). One day, just after his bath in a river, he encountered a *chandala*. A *chandala* is someone who deals with the disposal of corpses. He instantly asked the chandala to move away. The *chandala* replied, "Are you asking the *Atma* (the Soul) to move or the *anatma* (the body) to move? If *Atma*, the *Atma* that is everywhere, including you and me, cannot move. If it was the body, the body is *jada* (lifeless) and cannot move. What is it you ask to move?". Shankaracharya was astonished by his knowledge. He told him, *whether you are a chandala or a brahmin, you*

*who possess this knowledge are my guru.*

### **Benefits of seeing *Brahman* in all**

The one who has attained the union with *Brahman* and is established in that knowledge does not have a rebirth. He leaves the body and does not have to be born again and experience *samsara*.

Even if the intellect knows that all is *Brahman*, the mind still sees objects as forms. It is the nature of the mind to waver. It is neither fixated on the Soul nor on the non-Soul. Controlling the mind and keeping it on *Brahman* is very hard. Despite the difficulty, one must keep his mind in *Brahman* because *Brahman* is bliss (*ananda swaroopa*). Attaining *Brahman* is achieving eternal bliss.

### **Signs of *Brahmanishtha***

A *Brahmanishtha* is someone who has established a union with *Brahman*. His characteristics are defined below:

1. When one's mind does not get affected by external circumstances, he has established a union with his knowledge. They do not experience the turbulence of the mind due to desired or undesired situations. Desired or undesired is only the judgment of others. For the one established in the knowledge, it is just the *prarabdha karma* manifesting itself through him.
2. When established in the knowledge, one does not have any more doubts about the Self. His wisdom cannot be shaken, and his mind cannot be deluded.

## **Verses 18 – 20**

Lord Krishna said,

*The Self-realized sage sees the transcendence within all beings, whether it is a humble **brahmin**, a cow, an elephant, a dog, or a dog eater. 5.18*

*Those who have achieved equality of vision among beings conquer the cycle of birth and death in this very life. They are flawless like the **Brahman** and are seated in the Absolute Truth. 5.19*

*Seated in **Brahman**, with steady intellect and free from delusion, he neither rejoices in pleasant experiences nor grieves the unpleasant. 5.20*



## Part V

# The Glory of Renunciation

### Renounce to experience eternal bliss

*Bhagavan* Krishna says one can experience internal bliss only by renouncing all the external worldly pleasures.

#### Why can't we experience both worldly pleasure and internal bliss together?

We cannot experience both together because it is not possible. The senses and the body experience worldly pleasures. To experience external pleasure fully, we must identify ourselves as the body and the senses. To experience the bliss of the Self, we must remove our identity from the body and the mind and place it on the Self.

Without identifying oneself with the body and the senses, one cannot experience pleasure through the body and the senses. Without identifying with the Self, one cannot experience the bliss of experiencing the Self. While still identifying with the body, senses, and mind, one cannot reach the Self. Once in union with the Self, there is no slipping back into the delusion of identifying oneself with the body and mind again. Therefore, indulging in worldly pleasures and experiencing bliss by experiencing the Self together is not possible.

Our mind, by nature, is always inclined towards external pleasures. We all have weaknesses in one or the other sense organs, and what we indulge in shows where our identity is, and the same is also our weakness.

*Abhimana*: *Abhimana* can be translated as pride, vanity, or identification. Where our *abhimana* lies is where we experience happiness. The mind dwells in the sense organs and body as 'I am' with *abhimana*.

*Abhinivesha*: *Abhinivesha* is referred to as a strong *abhimana*. It is the incorrect identification of one with the physical body. It is clinging ignorantly to life even if one's life is full of suffering. *Abhinivesha* is considered one of the five *kleshas*.

*Klesha* can be translated as poison; they are impediments to one's spiritual progress. *Kleshas* are afflictions or negative states of mind that hinder enlightenment. The five *kleshas* are:

1. Ignorance (*Avidya*),
2. Egoism (*Asmita*),
3. Attachment (*Raga*),
4. Aversion (*Dvesa*),
5. Fear of death (*Abhinivesha*).

*Abhinivesha* has to be removed to be liberated. When one is so much into *anatma* (non-soul — the body and the mind), he will not understand that he is *Atma* (Soul).

Eternal bliss is attained only by removing the identity from the body. This is renunciation. We should only use worldly objects to sustain ourselves and not indulge. The senses and the body are instruments and should be used only for the transaction with the world and not to indulge in it. For example, eating for the sustenance of the body and eating for pleasure are two different things.

Renunciation does not mean one stops all interactions with the world. It is to transact minimally and solely for the sustenance of the body and not for enjoying the objects of the world.



With discrimination (*viveka*), one will achieve renunciation. But renunciation is a lot harder to achieve than achieving discrimination.

One cannot find true happiness from worldly pleasures. The external pleasures are all just manifestations of *maya*, which looks like happiness. Happiness is truly inside, but many people do not even know it. The Soul is bliss (*ananda swaroopa*). Most are involved in indulgence with worldly objects because they think the objects give them joy. But the eventual consequence of this short-term joy is sorrow, which we do not foresee.

For one yearning for liberation, there is a period in between where he has renounced everything but has not yet established the union with the Self. In this period, neither does he get joy from the external objects nor does he experience bliss from the Self. It is, however, a small period in which the crossover will happen. Renunciation is mandatory for liberation.

### **Renunciation itself is joy**

Renunciation, in itself, is a great joy. It is many folds the joy an object of pleasure can bring one. We all can see the comfort in interaction with the object of our desire, but we do not see the eventual consequences, which is sorrow.

### **The characteristics of external pleasure**

**Transitory:** The joy of any indulgence is transitory. There is always a beginning and an end to this joy. For example, the joy of eating begins when one starts eating and disappears when the action ends. After the action, the joy is over, and as a result of the action, it may even cause adversities.

When experiencing an object of desire, it gives only pleasure for so long until the mind desires another object. The joy the world can give is like a spark that neither existed before nor will last forever.

**Begetter of misery:** One who experiences joy from worldly objects will also experience sorrow from them. When one loses the object that gives one pleasure, it leads to misery. The more joy one gets out of an object, the more will be the misery from its loss.

- Fear: While indulging in worldly pleasure, one also constantly fears losing what he possesses. This is because one is enslaved by the objects he depends upon over a long time. While still possessing the object, the fear of losing the object possesses one. The objects that give one a sense of comfort also give him fear.
- Dissatisfaction: There is no object/ person that can make another eternally happy. Irrespective of how great the joy one has experienced from it, the joy does not last forever. It fades away eventually.

### **The big impediments**

The two main impediments for the one on the spiritual path are:

1. Desire
2. Anger

**Desire:** Desire is wanting to experience those (objects or people) that we like to see, hear, or think about. It is the passion to experience them.

**Anger:** Any barrier between one and the object of his desire induces anger. The more the desire for the object, the more will be the anger when there is a hindrance to experiencing it.

Desire and anger are both strong forces that must be calmed. Ideally, they both must be removed completely. But they are much more deep-rooted and cannot be removed just by a thought. Lord Krishna insists on controlling the force of both desire and anger. He says only those who can control the impulses of desire and anger and those who destroy their likes and dislikes will attain the equanimity of mind and achieve happiness.

## Verses 21 – 23

Lord Krishna said,

*Detaching from external pleasure, the knower of Absolute truth discovers happiness in the Self; engaged in the meditation of **Brahman**, he attains inexhaustible bliss. 5.21*

*The pleasure attained from the contact of the senses with the objects is the cause of pain. They have a beginning and an end. The wise are not delighted by them. 5.22*

*One who can control the forces of desire and anger before leaving the body is a truly happy **yogi**. 5.23*

Having detailed renunciation and control, Lord Krishna discourses about the fruits of attaining knowledge. He also details the characteristics of the liberated.



## Part VI

# Steps to Liberation

The two types of liberation are:

1. *Jivanmukti*
2. *Videhamukti*

***Jivanmukti:*** *Jiva* means life; *mukti* means liberation. *Jivanmukti* is achieving liberation while alive. *Jivanmukta* is one who has attained knowledge and has achieved the union with *Brahman* while still being in a gross body. After attaining knowledge, all his *sanchita karma* and *agami karma* perish.

*Sanchita karma* is the sum total of all actions done by one during all his previous births. *Agami karma* is the newly created *karma* which will affect the future. One has been able to take up a gross body because of one's *prarabdha karma*. For a *jivanmukta*, this *karma* completes in his body, and when the *prarabdha* gets over, he leaves the gross body without the need to return.

The gross body made of the *panchmahabhutas* — the five primordial elements (space, air, fire, water, and earth) will dissolve back in them. His subtle body dissolves in the *suksmabhutas* (subtle elements). All his *karma* is exhausted, and he does not have to take birth to extinguish any *karma*. He becomes *Brahman*.

### The characteristics of a *jivanmukti*

- He is happy with himself.
- He is not concerned or interested in external matters.
- He is fully satisfied.
- He is *Brahmaswaroopa* – becomes *Brahman*

***Videhamukti:*** *Videha* means without the body. *Videhamukti* means liberation after death.

### Steps to attain liberation

*Karma yoga* and *jnana yoga* are the two prime steps to attain liberation. A few intermediary steps are explained below:

1. Destroy sins
2. Understand the subtle truth
3. Dispel doubts
4. Control the mind and the body

**Destroy sins:** The people on the path to liberation strive to remove their sins first. Sins, in this context, mean attachment and aversion, which are also considered impurities. Most sins are committed because of these two impurities. Sins are hindrances to one's spiritual progress, and so they have to be removed.

Anyone closer to liberation must have done a lot of penance. Penance help remove sins. Some wise people take up hardship intentionally, for they help remove sins.

When the learned encounter suffering, they take it as a blessing to wipe away their sins. Even if they do not encounter suffering, they take up hardship by performing penance like fasting, walking to pilgrimage destinations, charity, etc. Penance and sacrifices reduce one's sins.

**Understand the subtle truth:** If the sins are removed, one can understand the subtle truth. The subtle truth is not apparent. It is hidden and needs to be realized. For example, the earth appears to be flat, but the truth is it is not. Similarly, the objects of our desire appear to be the source of our comfort and pleasure, but they are the begetter of misery.

After removing the sins, one must understand the subtle truth of the Self. This is done through *sravana* — listening to the teacher until one understands. This is an important step in *jnana yoga*.

**Dispel doubts:** Those who attain knowledge will no longer have doubts about the truth. With *manana* (contemplating what was thought until one has a clear understanding of it), all the doubts must be dispelled.

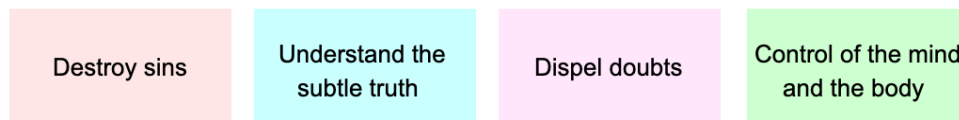
**Control the mind and the body:** Even after attaining the knowledge and before attaining union with *Brahman*, it is possible to slip back into non-soul (*anatma*). For this reason, until one is established in the knowledge, he has to control the senses and the mind.

This can be achieved by *nididhyasana* (by meditating, one should meditate until the knower and the known becomes the same.)

Lord Krishna says the one who passes through all these steps and is helpful to others will attain *Brahman*. He says being non-violent and not harming other beings by action or words is a virtue that leads to liberation.

One must control desire, anger, mind, and senses and renounce all actions to attain liberation by practising *sravana*, *manana*, and *nididhyasana*.

#### Intermediate Steps to Liberation



## Verses 24 – 26

Lord Krishna said,

*A **yogi** who derives happiness from within and delights within, who is illumined within, attains liberation, himself becoming **Brahman**. 5.24*

*Free from sins and doubts, self-controlled and devoted to the welfare of all living beings, these sages attain liberation. 5.25*

*Free from desire and anger, the self-controlled and the Self- realized attain liberation both here and hereafter. 5.26*

Emphasizing attaining and retaining the knowledge, Lord Krishna teaches how to meditate on the knowledge of the Self. This is an essential aspect to establish a union with the knowledge and attain liberation.

Therefore, an entire chapter is dedicated to meditation. The next chapter, *Dhyana yoga* — is about meditation. Lord Krishna concludes this chapter with a short introduction to meditation.



## Part VII

# Introduction to Meditation

*Dhyana* means contemplation or meditation. Some basic rules for meditation are:

1. Block out external matters
2. Focus the gaze in-between the eyebrows
3. Harmonize the breath

**Block out external matters:** The external world or the external objects by themselves cannot distract one. Only when one broods on them or establishes contact with them through the body or the mind will one be distracted by them. While in contemplation, anything external should be kept external.

**Focus the gaze in-between the eyebrows:** One is easily distracted when the eyes are fully open and can fall asleep while meditating when the eyes are completely closed. The eyes should be half closed and focused in between the eyebrows.

**Harmonize the breath:** Balancing the incoming and outgoing breath calms the mind.

### Basic Rules of Meditation

Block out external matters	Focus the gaze in-between the eyebrows	Harmonize the breath
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Lord Krishna says the spiritual aspirant who meditates correctly without anger and desire with full control of his senses will soon achieve his goal. He says the benefits of meditation are to attain peace and to know His real nature.

The real nature of Lord Krishna is that He is *Ishvara* (the Lord of all creations). As the creator, He bestows the fruits of actions for all without discrimination and enjoys all the sacrifices and penance performed by all.

## Verses 27 – 29

Lord Krishna said,

*Closed to all external matters, holding the gaze between the eyebrows, regulating the outward and inward breath, subjugating the senses, the mind, and the intellect, dedicating himself to liberation, free from desire, fear and anger, he is liberated forever. 5.27 - 5.28*

*The one who knows Me as the enjoyer of all sacrifices and austerities, the Lord of all the worlds and the friend of all beings, attains everlasting tranquillity. 5.29*



**Aum Tat Sat**



# Summary

## Part I - *Sannyasa*

- *Sannyasa* means to throw away or leave everything behind for certain. *Sannyasa* is the complete renunciation of worldly life.
- The two main reasons for taking up *sannyasa* are: to attain liberation or to attain knowledge.
- *Vidvat Sannyasa* is taken up by those who have attained the knowledge of the Self.
- The main reasons for taking up *vidvat sannyasa* are to establish a union with the knowledge attained or if one's *prarabdha* dictates so.
- *Vividisha sannyasa* is taken up by those frustrated in *samsara* and have renounced the world.
- The main reasons for taking up *vividisha sannyasa* are to attain the knowledge of Self or to protect one's renunciation
- *Karma yoga* and *sannyasa* both lead to liberation.
- *Karma yoga* is a safe path in which one experiences all his desires righteously, understands their transient nature, and slowly leaves them. Until one is certain that he has renounced completely, he must perform *karma yoga*
- A *karma yogi* is a perpetual *sannyasi*.
- Performing *karma yoga* is being in a state of equipoiseness. When one is free from dualities, his actions do not bind him.
- One is allowed to take up *sannyasa* only if he qualifies for at least one of the two: the person has attained the knowledge of Self, or the person has completely renounced everything for certain.
- *Karma yoga* is doing one's duty with perfection, irrespective of how trivial one's duty might be. It is not expecting rights or results from one's duty performed. It is accepting the outcome of one's duty performed with an equipoised mind.
- *Jnana-karma-sannyasa* is to see inaction in action and action in inaction.

## Part II - *Karma Yoga*

- Without the knowledge of *jnana-karma-sannyasa*, one does not have the right to *sannyasa*.
- For any action to occur, there are three steps involved: intentions made in mind, decisions made by the intellect and actions performed by the body.
- Another reason for the action is our association with the action, the thought, "I am the doer". *Karma yoga* removes these two reasons from an action.
- By performing *karma yoga*, one cleans off all these impurities and, as a result, attains a strong discrimination power.
- With the discrimination of what is permanent and what is not, one's desire for knowledge and liberation increases.
- An unrighteous lifestyle will bring one sorrow and fade his discrimination capabilities.

## Part III – The Wise

- The one who sees the action in inaction and inaction in action treats his body as an instrument and is happily seated on it.
- The wise think they have a body, while the ignorant think they are the body—the wise with the knowledge neither acts nor causes others to act.
- Only performing *karma yoga* is a waste of birth. The ideal life goal is to perfect *karma yoga* to attain the purity of mind and move on to *jnana yoga* (the *yoga*

of knowledge) and strive for liberation within a lifetime.

- *Ishvara* can be translated as God, while *Brahman* is translated as the Absolute Reality. *Ishvara* is the manifestation of *Brahman* along with *Maya*.
- According to the sacred texts, *Ishvara* is the creator of all that there is and is the rewarder of every action's fruits.
- *Nirguna Brahman* is *Brahman* without any qualities or attributes
- *Saguna Brahman* is *Brahman* with *maya* and its attributes.
- All beings are born under the influence of *maya*. Ignorance hides one's discrimination abilities. Ignorance is removed by knowledge.

#### Part IV - All is *Brahman*

- *Namarupa drishti* is seeing an object as it appears — the form or only the object's physical appearance.
- *Swaroop drishti* is seeing the real nature of the object
- A sage sees everything as the same, not by his eyes but by his intellect. Though his eyes show him the form, the intellect knows they are *Brahman*.
- The one who has attained the union with *Brahman* and established in that knowledge does not have a rebirth.

#### Part V - The Glory of Renunciation

- One can experience internal bliss only by renouncing all external worldly pleasures.
- Without identifying oneself with the body and the senses, one cannot experience pleasure through the body and the senses. Without identifying oneself with the Self, one cannot experience the bliss of experiencing the Self.
- While still identifying with the body, senses, and mind, one cannot reach the Self. Once in union with the Self, there is no slipping back into the delusion of identifying oneself with the body and mind again.
- Renunciation does not mean one stops all interactions with the world. It is to transact minimally and solely for the sustenance of the body and not for enjoying the objects of the world
- Renunciation, in itself, is a great joy.
- We all can see the comfort in interaction with the object of our desire, but we do not see the eventual consequences, which is sorrow.
- External pleasure is transient and a begetter of misery.
- The two main impediments for the one on the spiritual path are: desire and anger.

#### Part VI – Steps to Liberation

- *Jivanmukti* is achieving liberation while alive.
- *Videhamukti* means liberation after death.
- Intermediary steps to liberation are to destroy sins, understand the subtle truth, and dispel doubts.
- One must control desire, anger, mind, and senses and renounce all actions to attain liberation by practising *sravana*, *manana*, and *nididhyasana*.

#### Part VII – Introduction to Meditation

- *Dhyana* means contemplation or meditation. Some basic rules for meditation are to block out external matters, focus the gaze in-between the eyebrows and harmonize the breath.
- The spiritual aspirant who meditates correctly without anger and desire with full control of his senses will soon achieve their goals.

## Chapter 6

### Dhyana yoga



*Dhyana* means meditation. Lord Krishna discusses different types of meditation, how and when to perform them, external and internal aid to meditation, the nature of meditation and the result attained through meditation. Arjuna, realizing how hard it is to control the mind during meditation, asks Lord Krishna about the plight of a failed *yogi* on the path to liberation. Lord Krishna assures him that there is no destruction for an unsuccessful *yogi* in this or the next world and elucidates the path of an unsuccessful *yogi*.



## Part I

# Introduction to Meditation

*Dhyana* means meditation, are practices to perfect the mind. To understand *dhyana*, we must understand *samsara* — the cycle of death and rebirth. The unfulfilled life we undergo with different emotions like fear, attachment, and insecurity is *samsara*. We must know that:

- To free ourselves from *samsara*, we must free ourselves from ignorance.
- Ignorance is only removed by knowledge.
- Knowledge is attained only through the respective instruments. For example, visual knowledge of an object is attained through the eyes and auditory knowledge through the ears.

### **Meditation is not an instrument.**

It is important to know that meditation is not an instrument through which one attains knowledge. Meditation itself does not give one any knowledge.

### **The role of meditation**

The Vedas are the instruments through which the knowledge of the Self can be attained. However, one must have the competency to use them to attain knowledge. Without competency, the scriptures will enter the mind of even the most willing and obedient as only words and will not translate to knowledge. It is meditation that gives one the competency to attain the knowledge of the Self. Without meditation, even if one learns the scripture, it will not become wisdom for him.

Meditation alone does not lead one to liberation. It helps one attain the competency to understand the scriptures and attain the knowledge of the Self from it.

### **Meditation should not be done for the following reasons**

- Meditation does not give one knowledge.
- Many may encounter mystical experiences while meditating. Though enjoyable, these experiences will not help achieve the desired goal of meditation.
- By performing meditation, some may attain some special abilities or supernatural powers. They are called *siddhis*. These are mere distractions and not the goal.
- Other benefits of meditation include better health, general wellbeing, etc., which come naturally with meditation. These should be considered a byproduct of meditation and not the goal itself.

The goal of meditation is to attain qualification for knowledge and establish a union with it. Anything that comes as a byproduct of meditation without any effort should not be made the goal of meditation. Meditation is a double-edged sword with which one can destroy oneself if the goal is lost.

### ***Dhyana***

Meditation is broadly classified into:

1. *Upasana*
2. *Nididhyasana*

**Upasanas:** *Upasanas* are meditation practices done before *sravana*. *Sravana* is listening to the teacher until one understands. These are the meditation practices performed to attain the competency to understand the scriptures. They are preparatory meditations to attain the knowledge of the Self.

**Nididhyasana:** *Nididhyasana* is the meditation practice that is to be performed after attaining the knowledge of the Self to establish with the knowledge. *Nididhyasana* is the meditation in which the knower and the known become the same.

As the term meditation is very generic, we will be using the respective terms going forward.

### Dhyana (Meditation)

Upasana	Nididhyasana
The meditation practices to attain competency to understand the scriptures.	The meditation practices performed after attaining knowledge to establish with it.

### Upasana

There are four types of *upasanas*. On completing all of them successfully, one is said to be qualified for receiving knowledge (*sravana*). The four types of *upasanas* are:

1. Relaxation meditation
2. Concentration meditation
3. Expansion meditation
4. Value meditation

#### Relaxation meditation

One cannot attain the result of meditation instantly. It takes years of practice to attain any result from meditation. When one sits for meditation, his body, mind, and senses are still active (they are always in action). To calm the mind, one should start by calming the body first.

**The body:** The body must be trained to sit in a place without any action for the entire duration of meditation. The body should only use as much energy to keep it sitting in the position. Holding the body too tight can make one tired after the meditation. Before the body is trained to be calm, the mind should not be trained.

**The senses organs:** The sense organs are calm only during sleep. They should be trained to be calm while awake during meditation.

**The breathing:** Practice calming the breaths. In general, we breathe fast. The breath should be calmed by breathing in and out slowly.

**The mind:** We use the mind to experience the external world through our senses. We should use the mind to see the mind. The mind plays two roles:

1. The doer (*kartha*)
2. The instrument (*karana*)

The mind is always identified as oneself. It is thought to be the doer, “I” (*kartha*). When one experiences the world, he associates the mind as himself and the experience as external. The observed world becomes external, and the mind, which is the instrument of observation, is taken as oneself.

The eyes are the instruments to see the world. The ears are the instruments to hear the world. While we know the sense-organs are the instruments to perceive the world, we mix the mind up with the ego. However, the mind is also a mere instrument to experience the world via our senses.

After achieving control over the body, senses, and breath, we must practice looking at the mind as an instrument (*karana*). The mind, which is mixed up with the ego and identified as the doer, should be separated from the ego and be identified as an instrument of observation.

In this meditation, one has to recognize the mind as an object and observe it. From this, one must understand he is not the thoughts that run through his mind.

### **Watching the mind**

Watching the mind is similar to sitting on a riverbank and watching the river flow. We do not stop the flow or add to the flow. We just sit outside the river and watch it. Similarly, in relaxation meditation, one should just watch the thoughts that flow in his mind.

There may be favourable or unfavourable thoughts. In both cases, one must just watch his thoughts as an object. One must not encourage favourable thoughts or shun the unfavourable. The aim is to watch and externalize the thoughts.

### **The two actions one performs in relaxation meditation are:**

1. Separate oneself from the mind
2. Acquaint oneself with one's own mind.

While looking at the mind as an object, the mind calms down. Calming the body, senses, breath, and mind is the goal of this meditation. This may take very long to achieve, but it is essential. Without achieving this, one will not succeed in later meditations.

### **The goal of relaxation meditation is:**

1. Calming the body, senses, breath and mind.
2. To know that the mind is an instrument, separate from oneself.

With practice, the body, senses, breath and mind become calm without any struggle when one sits for meditation. At this stage, one is considered ready for the next meditation.

### **Concentration meditation:**

Many begin with concentration meditation without perfecting relaxation meditation, but this must not be done. It is essential to perfect relaxation meditation before starting with concentration meditation. Concentration meditation is an important meditation that is entirely focused only on the mind.

In this meditation, the mind is kept focused on a chosen object without any other distractions during the entire period of the meditation.

During relaxation meditation, the mind is allowed to wander and accept all thoughts. During concentration meditation, however, one decides what to think about and consciously, with effort, stops all the other thoughts from entering the mind.

### **Performing concentration meditation**

One must assign a task to the mind and instruct the mind to perform it. After instructing, one must protect the mind from all other thoughts. The mind, by nature, wanders from one thought to another by itself so much that we do not even know our next thought until it has been thought by the mind.

In this meditation, one must instruct what thought one must hold during the entire duration of the meditation. An example would be to chant a *mantra* 108 times. This is essentially instructing the mind what the next 108 thoughts should be.

Ideally, the mind must abide by one's instructions, but because of the lack of practice, the mind dictates. The goal of this meditation is to tame the mind only to think about what it is instructed to think. Even great yogis have difficulties controlling their minds. For a beginner, this can be very hard.

The mind is controlled only during the period of meditation and is set free after that. This meditation gives the mind great power and removes weaknesses. As a result of this meditation, people have been known to do *siddhis* (*siddhis* are supernatural,



magical abilities attained as a result of meditation). However, that is not our goal.

### **Ways to concentrate**

**Manasa puja:** *Manas* means mind. *Puja* means to worship. *Manasa puja* is worship performed in one's mind. One must worship in mind and engages the mind without distractions during the entire period of worship.

**Manasa parayana:** *Manasa parayana* is reciting chants in mind. It is easier to recite them aloud but reciting them in mind is a lot harder. This practice builds concentration.

**Manasa japa:** *Manasa japa* is meditating on God. This practice is essential to calm the mind down. Other than the chosen form of God, nothing must enter the mind during this practice.

Many people think meditations are to keep the mind empty without any thoughts. The mind is action-oriented and cannot be kept without its actions – the thoughts. It is only possible to engage the mind through thoughts. By instructing the mind, we achieve focus on the desired thought.

The relaxation and concentration meditations do not require any knowledge from the scriptures to perform. Anyone can perform it with little practice. Most spiritual organizations perform only these practices as meditation. There is no doubt that these two meditations benefit those who practice them regularly. Some benefits include better health, a fearless mind, feeling energetic and happy, and improved focus. However, one must not stop with only these two meditations. The next meditation is mandatory.

The mind attains immense strength with concentration meditation, and this can be used for either good or bad. If one stops with these meditations, the mind becomes powerful but is not expanded. A powerful mind can be harmful to oneself and others.

To perform the following two meditations, one requires the knowledge of the scriptures.

### **Expansion Meditation**

For many, their ego is centered only on their bodies. One can experience joy only if he experiences the pleasure object by himself. For example, the joy of eating is experienced only when one eats and not when he sees another eat.

At times we see the expansion of consciousness. That is, when someone close to us experiences joy, we feel the joy too. For instance, when a child is happy, the parents are too. This is because they feel the child is a part of themselves. They see themselves in the child. This has to be extended to all beings and is the goal of the expansion meditation.

When we know "I am non-dual" and "I am not different from the complete", the goal of the meditation is met.

There are different kinds of meditation mentioned in the scriptures to widen one's consciousness. Along with expanding consciousness, expansion meditation removes all the diseases from one's mind, like attraction, aversion, jealousy, fear, etc.

Without expanding, if we only strengthen our minds through concentration meditation, the impurities in mind also get strengthened. A strong mind with impurities is dangerous.

### **Value Meditation**

Value meditation is performed to cultivate good values like speaking the truth, practising non-violence, involving in charity, etc. Value meditation is meditating on the values one intends to acquire and retain.

Everyone has a sense of right and wrong, but some compromise their values for instant gratification. Values are upheld as worthy, but only until something more valuable (in their opinion) comes up. For example, one may hold speaking the truth as an important value. He may not compromise his values normally, but if he benefits from lying, he might compromise. In this case, he can only see the immediate benefits



of compromising his values and not the goodness adhering to his values eventually brings him. This is because he has not experienced the benefits of upholding his values. And by not having experienced, he is unable to hold on to the values when the compensations for compromise tempt him.

One accepts lower joy only because he has not experienced greater joy. He has not experienced the greater joy his values bring him and therefore is ready to compromise them for lower joy. Only those who have kept their values know the benefits of keeping them, and the others by not keeping them do not know. Therefore, they do not have a reason to keep them up also. For example, if we see a hungry person, we could share our food or ignore them. If we share, however, our joy and satisfaction are much more than just eating by ourselves. The one who has shared before knows this kind of joy and will share. The one who has not thinks eating all by himself, ignoring the hungry, gives him more joy, but this is a lower joy.

It is a vicious circle and can be broken only by learning from the lives of the great ones. Having tasted the peace and greatness of keeping up one's values, one will not compromise them for anything. No compensation can justify the compromise. The value meditation is meditating on these values.

One has to meditate on the values he has to acquire. Just with the knowledge of what is right and wrong, one cannot honour them. Only by experiencing the joy of adhering to them will one keep them up.

#### Upasanas

Relaxation meditation	Concentration meditation	Expansion meditation	Value meditation
<p>To calm the mind, body and senses</p> <p>To separate the mind from oneself</p>	<p>To tame the mind to only think about what is instructed</p>	<p>To expand the consciousness into knowing "I am non-dual"</p>	<p>To acquire and retain good values without compromising them</p>

The result of the successful completion of all these meditations qualifies one for knowledge of the scriptures. Otherwise, the scriptures stay only as words in one's mind and will not translate to wisdom.

#### *Nididhyasana*

*Nididhyasana* is the meditation practice that is to be performed after attaining the knowledge of the Self by listening to the teacher to establish a union with *Brahman*.

By nature, all human minds have two kinds of flaws:

1. Impurities
2. Ignorance

**Impurities:** The types of impurities are:

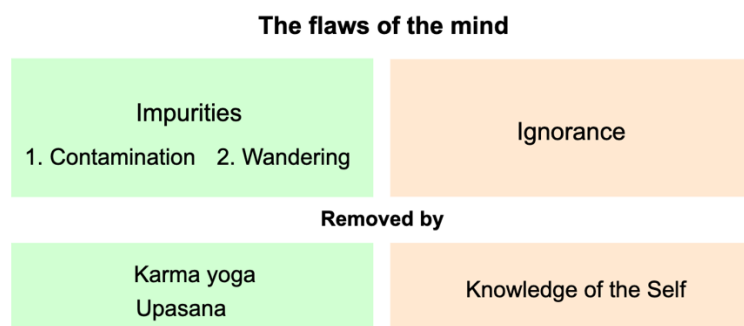
1. Contamination (*malam*): Everyone's mind is generally contaminated with a wide range of emotions like anger, jealousy, attachment, desires, etc.
2. Wandering (*vikshepa*): The mind is restless and wanders from one thought to another. It is always very distracted from oneself.

The successful completion of *karma yoga* and *upasana* will remove these impurities. When the impurities are removed, the mind is calm but ignorant.

**Ignorance:** The ignorance of the Self can only be removed by knowledge. The scriptures are the instrument to attain knowledge. The scriptures are *jada* (lifeless),

and if one just reads them, he will not attain the intended knowledge. When read by oneself, he will only understand so much that he is capable of from his level of knowledge. Therefore, we must hear them from a *guru* (*sravana*). The *guru* is the facilitator, and the scriptures are the instrument to remove ignorance.

While learning about the Self, one may have several doubts and, therefore, *manana* (addressing his doubts to the *guru* and removing all the doubts) is necessary. Both *sravana* and *manana* are the steps to knowledge.



### The mind of a practising student

The one who has performed *karma yoga*, *upasana*, *sravana*, *manana* and has attained the knowledge of the Self knows he is beyond all three bodies (the gross, subtle and causal body). He knows he is the Soul that illuminates them and that he is *satcitananda* - truth, consciousness, bliss. For him, nothing external should bother him, and he should be devoid of fear, anger and other elements of *samsara*. However, even after attaining knowledge, there is a phase where he is still not steadfast in the acquired knowledge. During this phase, even though he knows he is not the body and the mind, he slips into identifying himself with his body and mind often as he interacts with the world through them. When his consciousness slips to non-soul he experiences *samsara* like other *samsaris*.

He experiences deep sorrow in this period as he experiences *samsara* and sorrow from the fact that he is still experiencing *samsara* even after attaining knowledge.

On attaining the knowledge of the Self, one's body and mind are not destroyed. The body and mind attained from *karma* and will remain till his *prarabdha karma* (the *karma* that is to be experienced through the current incarnation) is over. As he still has the body, even after knowledge, the power to remain in the knowledge that he is not the body is difficult. Though he knows he is not the body or the mind, because of the transaction with the world, he is unable to stay steadfast in the newly found knowledge.

*Nididhyasana* is, therefore, necessary so that one does not slip back into identifying with his body and mind. In general, one's own *samskaras* (mental imprints) and *svabhava* (intrinsic nature) become a hindrance to achieving steadfastness with the acquired knowledge. There are two types of *nididhyasana*, and they are:

1. Any time the knowledge of the Self is meditated upon is *nididhyasana*. This is performed arbitrarily and does not have any rules regarding when or how long it should be performed. Even listening to the scriptures again is *nididhyasana*.
2. Another type of *nididhyasana* is to allocate separate time to perform meditation and to contemplate the Self.

### The difference between *Upasana* and *Nididhyasana*

The main differences between *upasana* and *nididhyasana* are:

1. *Upasana* has certain mandatory rules one must follow. For *nididhyasana*, there aren't any.

2. The subject of meditation for *upasana* is *Saguna Brahman*, which is *Brahman* with *gunas* (attributes) — God (*Ishvara*). The subject of meditation for *nididhyasana* is *Nirguna Brahman*, *Brahman* without *gunas*.
3. *Upasana* is done before attaining the knowledge of the Self. The one who is ignorant of the Self must do *upasana*. *Nididhyasana* is practised after attaining the knowledge of the Self.
4. *Upasana* can result in material wellbeing if that is one's goal. When done without any desire, it qualifies one for knowledge. The result of *nididhyasana* is *jivanmukti* (achieving liberation while alive).

#### The difference between upasana and nididhyasana

Upasana	Nididhyasana
1. Has rules.	1. Does not have any rules.
2. The subject of meditation is Saguna Brahman (God).	2. The subject of meditation is Nirguna Brahman.
3. Is done before attaining knowledge.	3. Is done after attaining knowledge.
4. The result can be material wellbeing or knowledge based on one's motive.	4. The result is liberation.

In this chapter, Lord Krishna discusses *nididhyasana* and the rules for *upasana*, which can also be used for *nididhyasana*, although not mandatory.

To control the mind, one must perform *upasana* and to contemplate the Soul, one must perform *nididhyasana*. Through meditation, we intend to achieve two things:

1. Control of the mind
2. Union with the Soul.

#### The goal of meditation

Upasana	Nididhyasana
To control the mind	To attain union with the Soul.

Meditation, in general, is very hard to perform. In the beginning, one has to prepare for the meditation itself.

Patanjali, the author of Yoga Sutras, defines steps to prepare the mind and the body for meditation. There are eight steps by perfecting which one can achieve the result of meditation. Each step has to be completed successfully to move on to the next. We move from disciplining gross to subtle bodies through these steps.

#### Patanjali Yoga Sutras

The first two steps are the conditions for the activities that arise from the body.

##### Step 1: *Yama*

*Yamas* are the actions one must not do. They are the restrictions laid out in the Yoga Sutra. There are five *yamas*, according to the Yoga Sutra. Below are actions which should be performed in order to restrain oneself from not performing the contrary:

1. **Non-violence (*Ahimsa*):** This is the first and very important action. We must refrain from all kinds of violence, from the body, speech, and thoughts. We receive what we give. We must give peace to others to receive peace, which is essential for our own spiritual growth.
2. **Truthfulness (*Satya*):** One must practice truth and authenticity in action, thought, and speech. Truthfulness is not deceiving others or oneself.
3. **Non-stealing (*Asteya*):** One must not desire other's objects and must not take what is not theirs.
4. **Chastity, fidelity, or refrainment (*Brahmacharya*):** *Brahmacharya* means different things in different *ashrams*. *Brahmacharya* is *celibacy* for an unmarried student. It is fidelity and chastity for a householder. Desires are not forbidden but must be experienced through the right conduct.
5. **Non-avarice (*Aparigraha*):** One must not hoard more than what is needed. Anything that is more than what is required will destroy one.

### Step 2: *Niyama*

*Niyamas* are the habits one must cultivate. The five *niyamas* are:

1. **Cleanliness (*Shaucha*):** One must cultivate purity and cleanliness of the mind, body, and speech
2. **Contentment (*Santosha*):** One must be content with what he already has. It is accepting the current circumstances and, therefore, one's life wholly.
3. **Austerity (*Tapa*):** One must practice self-discipline and perseverance. There are several types of austerity one can take up to cultivate these habits, like fasting, going on a pilgrimage, etc.
4. **Study of the Vedas (*Svadhyaya*):** We learn about the Self through the scriptures. We also attain wisdom from others even without living their lives through reading about them. One must cultivate reading and learning habits.
5. **Contemplation on God (*Ishvarapranidhana*):** Irrespective of how busy one is, he must take out time to worship or meditate on God.

Both *yama* and *niyama* are the conditions for the activities that arise from the body. The next step is about controlling the physical body.

### Step 3: *Asana*

*Asanas* are body postures commonly known as *yoga* poses. They help in conditioning the body and the mind. *Asanas* must be learned only from a *guru* who is well-versed in *yoga*. They must be performed only after regulating food, sleep and other aspects of wellbeing. Otherwise, they will have contrary effects.

### Step 4: *Pranayama*

*Pranayama* is a breath control exercise in *yoga*. With *pranayama*, we are moving from the gross to the subtler body. Control of *prana* (lifeforce) controls both the mind and the body. *Pranayama* also must be learned from a *guru* and performed systematically otherwise, they will have contrary effects.

### Step 5: *Pratyahara*

*Pratyahara* is an even subtler practice and is also referred to as *dama* in the Vedas. This is the practice of the control of the sense organs. The mind is constantly fed information through our senses. One cannot control the mind when it is constantly contaminated through the sense organs. Also, one must not allow the mind to linger on objects that do not help in spiritual growth.

### Step 6 *Dharana*

*Dharana* is focusing the mind on the chosen object for contemplation. It is fixing the mind on one point of focus without drifting away.

### Step 7 *Dhyana*

When one is successful with all the six steps mentioned earlier, he is ready for

meditation.

### **What is meditation?**

Most people think meditation is a thoughtless state of mind. Thoughtlessness is not possible. Meditation is only the mind tossing back and forth on the chosen object of the meditation.

Full undivided attention or complete mental peace is not possible during the entire period of meditation. This must not be expected also. Many people are discouraged because of their high expectations from meditation and, therefore, discontinue it sooner or later. It is important to know that even the ones with many years of practice will experience contrary thoughts during meditation. This is the nature of the mind. When undesired thoughts come into our minds, we should bring the mind back to the chosen object of meditation.

One attains the results of meditation only by constant practice, and anyone who practices constantly will attain the results. This is the rule of meditation. All the great ones have begun the same way, and only through practice have they gained control over their minds. All human minds are similar in nature, and perfection is achieved only through practice.

Meditation is a constant struggle to focus on the chosen object while the mind distracts itself. Many do not have the power to struggle through it. Successful completion of the six prior steps gives one the power to stay and struggle through.

### **Step 8: *Samadhi***

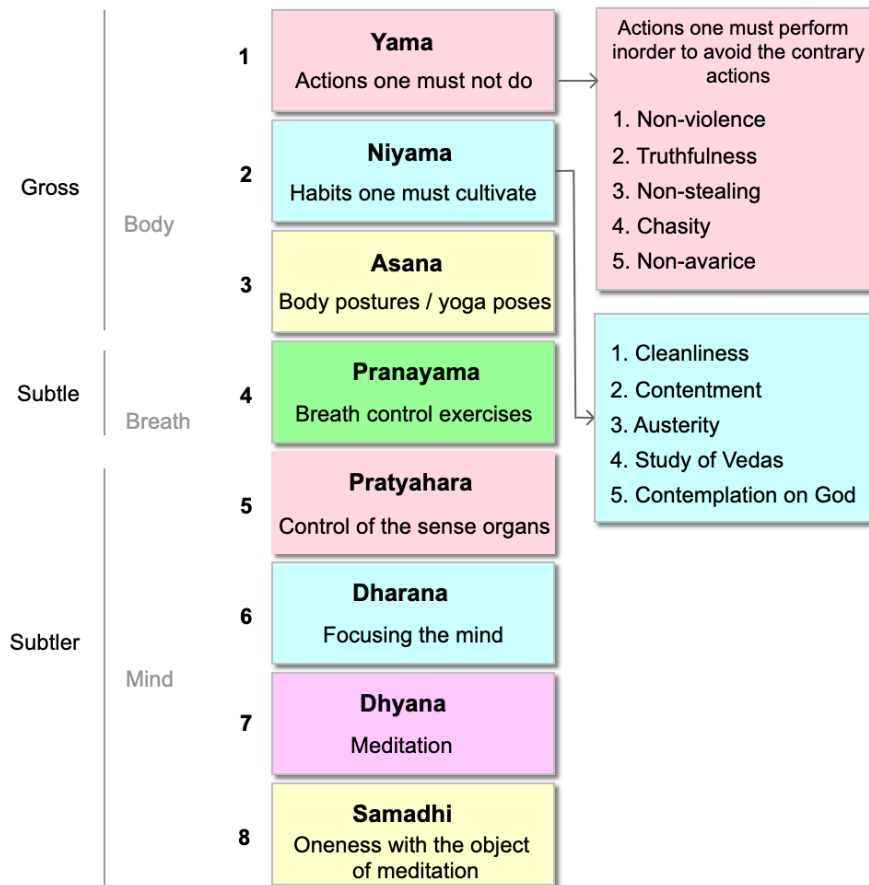
The fruit of meditation is *samadhi*. It is the calmness of the stabilized mind. In *samadhi*, one can focus the mind on the chosen object without any distracting thoughts.

*Samadhi* is a step of the Patanjali Yoga Sutra, and it is not the final goal. However, according to the Yoga Sutra, *samadhi* is considered the goal achieving, which there isn't anything more to aim for. The Vedas do not agree with this. According to the Vedas, liberation is the ultimate goal of human life, and knowledge is an integral part of it.

*Samadhi* can be achieved with *yogic* practices alone, even without attaining knowledge of the Self. Therefore, without attaining knowledge, if one attains *samadhi*, the peace attained is only temporary. On interacting with the world, they will lose their peace and fall back into their old habits of anger, desire, etc.

Without knowledge, one can reach *samadhi* but cannot attain liberation. Knowledge of the Self is mandatory for liberation.

# Patanjali Yoga Sutras







## Part II

# The *Yoga* of Meditation

Yoga Sutra broadly classifies preparation for meditation as:

1. External aid (*Bahiranga sadhana*)
2. Internal aid (*Antaranga sadhana*)

### External aid (*Bahiranga sadhana*)

Essentially, how one leads his life and what he does throughout the day determines the quality of the result one will attain from meditating. If one spends his entire day based on his desires, he will not attain any result from meditation.

Though meditation is done only for a small portion of one's day, the result one attains from it depends on other activities he performs throughout the day.

External aid is not an immediate preparation for meditation but a gradual effort to change one's way of life to a more righteous one.

### Internal aid (*Antaranga sadhana*)

*Antaranga sadhana* details the fundamentals of meditation, its rules, and other conditions to succeed in it.



This chapter discusses the four topics below in detail:

1. External aid (*Bahiranga sadhana*)
2. Internal aid (*Antaranga sadhana*)
3. Nature of meditation (*Dhyana swarupa*)
4. Result of meditation (*Dhyana phala*)

This chapter begins with Lord Krishna praising *karma yoga*. He says a *karma yogi* is equal to a *sannyasi* and a *dhyana yogi*. He compares the sacrifice of a *karma yogi* to a *sannyasi* (renunciant). A *karma yogi* has not sacrificed everything like a *sannyasi*, but he has sacrificed the fruits of his actions. A *dhyana yogi* is one who has achieved a calm mind and performs *nididhyasana*. A *karma yogi*, like a *dhyana yogi*, also begets calmness by leading a righteous life.

### External aid (*Bahiranga sadhana*)

Lord Krishna prescribes the two practices below as an external aid for meditation:

1. *Karma yoga*
2. Self-effort

***Karma yoga:*** *Karma yoga* is a preparation for *dhyana yoga*. *Karma yoga* itself, however, should not be the goal of one's life. Lord Krishna talks about two types of people:

- A spiritual aspirant who must perform *karma yoga*
- A *yogi*, who must renounce *karma* (actions).

***Aarurukshu:*** *Aarurukshu* is a person who desires to ascend. *Aarurukshu* is one who has the desire to enter *dhyana yoga* but is not qualified for it. He should be involved in *karma yoga* to attain the qualification.

***Yogaarooda:*** *Yogaarooda* is someone who has achieved the qualification for



*dhyana yoga*. He has to leave all actions (*karma*) to reach the ultimate goal. He is someone who aims to achieve steadfastness with the knowledge attained.

An *aarurukshu*, by doing *karma yoga*, attains *mumukshutva* (strong desire to be liberated) and *vairagya* (dispassion) and becomes a *yogaarooda*. In the beginning, there is only a very little desire for liberation and dispassion. If, at this stage, he leaves *karma yoga*, he will become a *mithyachara* (self-deluded) and not a *yogaarooda*.

*Aarurukshu* aims to become a *yogaarooda*, and *karma yoga* is the means to his goal. For a *yogaarooda* leaving *karma* (actions) is the means to his goal, which is liberation.

### Characteristics of a *yogaarooda*

According to the Upanishads, when one attains dispassion, he has no more duties. He can leave everything and go in search of knowledge to attain liberation. A strong desire for liberation and dispassion are important characteristics of a *yogaarooda*. Lord Krishna details a few more attributes of a *yogaarooda*.

- **Devoid of desire:** When one's mind is devoid of desire, he is a *yogaarooda*. The root of desire is *sankalpa*. *Sankalpas* are the thoughts about an object that it will give one pleasure (or pain) and therefore desiring the object (or building aversion towards it). The thought that an object gives pleasure (or pain) that runs continuously in the mind is *sankalpa*. The *sankalpas* become desires. The one who has sacrificed all the *sankalpas* is a *yogaarooda*.
- **Control of the senses:** By perceiving objects through one's senses, one becomes attached to them by thinking that the sense objects bring him pleasure. A *yogaarooda* is completely non-attached to all external objects, including his own body.
- **Non-attachment to actions:** Many are attached to the actions themselves. Our mind always instigates us into actions. For many, it is not possible to be without any action. This is an attachment to the action itself and is a weakness. Just like some are attached to objects, some are attached to being in action. Out of *rajo guna* (the quality of passion), everyone is involved in the action. A *yogaarooda* has crossed *rajo guna* and is in *sattva guna* (the quality of awareness), and being in *sattva guna*, he stays in inaction. Until one achieves these characteristics and can be without action because of *sattva guna*, he must perform *karma yoga*.

**Self-effort:** It is not entirely up to one to succeed in attaining knowledge. For one must get access to the scripture and a *guru* to learn from. Other's involvement largely assists or hinders one's path in the beginning. But for one who has reached *nididhyasana*, there are no external assistance or hindrances. He is on his own. One's success in *nididhyasana* solely depends on oneself. No scriptures, no *guru*, and no one else can help him. Only he has to help himself in establishing with the knowledge.

A *yogi* struggles a lot to control his mind and establish with the acquired knowledge. He experiences failure after failure in the process. At this stage, a lot of *yogi's* lose their confidence. The Vedas, which dictate one to be humble and submit to the *guru*, ask one to have faith in oneself. He has to lift himself up, for there are no others for him at this stage. One should not fall back into *anatma* (the body and the mind) after coming so far. He becomes his own enemy or his own friend at this stage. Therefore, without clarity, if one becomes a recluse, he will destroy himself. When one has won over his body, mind, and senses, for him, the mind, body, and senses are his friends. A fully calm mind is one's friend. When not, it becomes his enemy.

## Verses 1 – 6

Lord Krishna said,

*He who performs his duty without expecting the fruits of his actions is a **sannyasi** and a **yogi**. One is not a **sannyasi** by merely renouncing his duties, nor is he a **yogi** by merely giving up all actions. 6.1*

*That which is called **sannyasa** is not different from **yoga** (**karma yoga**), for none become a **yogi** (**dhyana yogi**) without renouncing the desire for the fruits of their actions. 6.2*

*For the sage who desires to attain (**dhyana**) **yoga**, the action is the means. For the one who has already reached **yoga**, for him renouncing actions is the means. 6.3*

*When one is neither attached to sense objects nor actions, renouncing all thoughts of enjoyment, he is said to have attained **yoga**. 6.4*

*One has to lift himself by his efforts and not degrade himself, for he is his own friend or his own enemy. 6.5*

*For the one who has conquered himself by himself – he is a friend of himself, but the one who has not conquered himself, his own self is his enemy. 6.6*

Lord Krishna talks about the fruits of **dhyana** (**nididhyasana**).

### **The fruits of meditation**

Liberation is the ultimate result of **nididhyasana**, and when one attains it, he will experience the following:

1. He sees his Self clearly
2. He experiences non-duality
3. He is satisfied
4. He remains unshaken

**He sees his Self clearly:** He sees himself as **Paramatma** (**Brahman**). Until liberation, he was in **samsara**, separate from **Brahman**. But after liberation, one can perceive his Self as **Brahman** without any hindrances.

**He experiences non-duality:** The liberated is the same in different situations, with different objects and with different people. For a **yogi**, friends and sinners are the same, as he knows all the differences are only in the **anatma** (body and mind). **Atma** (Soul) is the same for all. A **yogi** sees from the perspective of his knowledge which shows him the true nature of all, which is **Brahman**. Also, the nature of people changes from time to time, and so a **yogi** has compassion for all.

**He is satisfied:** Most people get satisfaction out of wealth, power, position, etc. When the reason for their satisfaction is gone, the satisfaction is also gone.

Wisdom is not easy to attain, but when attained, it will not leave one. The liberated attains satisfaction because of his wisdom. **Jnana** is the knowledge gained by the study of the scripture. **Vijnana** is the wisdom gained from experiencing the knowledge. A **yogi** is satisfied because of both **jnana** and **vijnana**. He is, therefore, eternally satisfied.

**He remains unshaken:** Under distress or anger, one's real nature comes out. Many may compromise their values in crisis. But the liberated under no circumstances will be disturbed from his wisdom, and his nature remains unshaken.

Fruits of Meditation (Fruits of Liberation)

He sees his Self clearly

He experiences  
non-duality

He is satisfied

He remains unshaken

## Verses 7 – 9

Lord Krishna said,

*The **yogi** who has conquered himself remains steadfast in his Supreme Self. He is undisturbed by the dualities like cold and heat, pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour. <sup>6.7</sup>*

*He is satisfied with his knowledge and wisdom and remains unshaken, having conquered his senses. For him, earth, stone, and gold are all the same. <sup>6.8</sup>*

*He regards well-wishers, friends, foes, the indifferent, the neutral, the hateful, relatives, the righteous and the sinners as equal. <sup>6.9</sup>*



### Part III

## Directions for the Practice of *Yoga*

### Internal aid (*Antaranga sadhana*)

Lord Krishna details how to perform meditation. He teaches the perfect conditions, rules, posture, places, and attitude for *nididhyasana*.

**Place: Solitude:** Meditation should always be performed alone. Therefore, one should choose a secluded place. For a *sannyasi* (renounced), it is ideal to meditate in the forests and the caves. For a householder, however, this may not be possible, and so he must choose a secluded place within his accessibility.

**Alone:** To meditate, one has to be physically alone. When there are two people, just the awareness that there is another around can distract one.

**Self-controlled:** The mind and the body should be tranquil and under control during the entire duration of the meditation.

**Without desire:** Meditation removes desires. However, for meditation also one must remove all desires and sit without contemplating them during meditation.

**Free from possessions:** When one has valuables, his mind is occupied by them. He is in constant fear of losing them. Therefore, for meditating, one should not carry anything valuable with him.

A yogi seated on animal skin in seclusion in preparation for meditation



**Clean place:** The mind is less agitated in a clean and organized place. Some places have been used only for clean and good reasons. Those places are clean by the nature of the deeds performed there. The place must be clean either by the nature of the deeds performed or at least tidy.

**Seat:** The meditation seat should neither be too high nor too low. High seats cause fear of falling, and low seats will not provide protection from crawling insects.

To increase the comfort level, Lord Krishna asks to find a spot with grass, cover it with animal skin (mostly deer), spread a cloth over it and sit on it to meditate. Though this is not a rule, the three layers protect one from the heat and the cold.

Meditation is a struggle, so one must mitigate the external struggles as much as possible. Having given some advice on the external place for meditation, Lord Krishna details how one's mind should be during meditation.

### The mind during meditation

When one is in peace without doing any work, the intellect becomes active. But during meditation, the intellect should not be used. The intellect should be shunned from planning and solving other issues in one's life.

The mind should be kept focused on the chosen object. There should not be any actions from the body, mind, memory or the senses. One must not go through the memories during meditation.

## The posture of the body

A yogi meditating with an erect spine and lowered gaze



The body must be firm and still. Meditation has to be done sitting. This is because one needs more effort and attention to keep the body standing. Lying down is effortless, and one can slip into sleep. Sitting requires just enough effort to keep one in meditation.

There are several postures mentioned by Patanjali in the Yoga Sutra. One has to choose based on his comfort. Patanjali mentions that the posture should be steady and comfortable to aid in concentration.

The trunk of the body, head, and neck should be in a straight alignment. It is often mentioned that the gaze of one should be fixed on the tip of one's nose. This does not mean that one has to gaze at the tip of his nose.

When the gaze is lowered, it looks as though one is gazing at the tip of his nose. Here it means to look within by drawing the gaze from external objects.

### A few more internal aids (*antaranga sadhana*)

1. **Calm the mind with a calm mind:** One finds inner peace by regularly meditating with a calm mind.
2. **Remove fear:** There are several penances one may put oneself through to reduce sin and progress spiritually. Fear is not one of them. In the beginning, many may be afraid to close their eyes, alone in seclusion. Fear is a hindrance to spiritual development, and so it should be eliminated.
3. **Keep the vows of *brahmachari*:** *Brahmacharya* is the observance of celibacy. It is the practice of self-control instead of sense gratification.
4. **Control the mind:** Tame the mind and keep it from wandering on external matters.
5. **Focus on Me and attain Me:** After fulfilling all the above conditions, Lord Krishna asks one to focus his mind on Him entirely to attain Him.

## Verses 10 – 14

Lord Krishna said,

*A **yogi** should constantly engage in meditation in seclusion, with a controlled mind and body, free from desires and possessions.* 6.10

*In a clean place, establish a firm seat made of grass, deerskin, and cloth which is neither too high nor too low. There, subjugating the mind and the senses, with one point focus practice **yoga** to purify the mind.* 6.11- 6.12

*Keeping the body, neck, and head erect and as though gazing at the tip of the nose, without distraction, tranquil, fearless, firm in the vow of celibacy, meditating on Me and devoted to Me, practice **yoga** having Me as the Supreme goal.* 6.13- 6.14

To entice Arjuna to pursue meditation, Lord Krishna talks about the result one attains from meditation (*nididhyasana*).

### The result of meditation (*nididhyasana*)

The one who meditates systematically and regularly, as mentioned, keeping his mind under control, attains eternal peace. He becomes a *jivanmukta* (liberated while alive) and is at peace until his *prarabdha karma* finishes. After that, he leaves the body,



liberated. After his death, the gross body mixes with the *sthulabhuta* — the five primordial gross elements (the *panchmahabhutas*), and his subtle body mixes with the *sukshmathuta* (the subtle elements) and his Soul integrates with *Brahman*, and he becomes *Brahmanswarupa* (takes the form of *Brahman*).

He will not have any contact with any of the three bodies (gross, subtle and causal), and, therefore, there is no birth or death for him. He will be liberated and exist in his pure form, which is *Brahman*.

Lord Krishna says, *He will exist in My form.*

## Verse 15

Lord Krishna said,

***Thus, constantly keeping the controlled mind absorbed in Me, the *yogi* with a balanced mind attains *nirvana*. He attains supreme peace which abides in Me (*Brahman*). 6.15***

Having discussed the ultimate goal and the results a *dhyana yogi* attains, Lord Krishna continues to talk about the merits of moderation. This is again a part of external aid (*bahiranga sadhana*).

### Moderation

*Karma yoga* and self-effort were discussed as external aid, adding to them is moderation in food and sleep.

A balanced life is essential for the success of meditation. In the following verses, Lord Krishna states the importance of moderation in food, sleep, rest and recreation.

Food must be taken solely to protect oneself and keep the gross body alive. Food is not an object of indulgence. When it becomes an object of indulgence, the food itself will destroy one. When food is ignored and not taken at all or not taken sufficiently, it will not protect one.

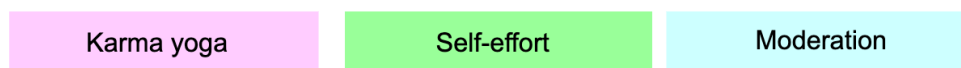
***Whatever food is suited to oneself, that protects; it injures not. A greater quantity injures, and a smaller quantity protects not.***  
— *Satapatha Brahmana*

The quantity of food prescribed in the scriptures is:

***Half (the stomach) for food, the third (quarter) for water and the fourth should be reserved for free movement of air.***

Moderation in sleep is also necessary. Too much sleep leads to *tamas guna* (the quality of dullness), and too little will lead to *rajas guna* (the quality of passion). Moderation is required in work and recreation also.

### External aid for meditation



### The middle path

Gautama Buddha gave up eating and drinking entirely to meditate. After a few days, he felt weak and was unable to stay steady in his meditation. A few women walked past him singing, *Tighten the string of tanpura (a musical instrument), but if you*

*tighten too much, it will snap, and if you tighten too little, it will not play.*

This helped Buddha realize what a grave mistake it was to ignore the body. It helped him find the middle path.

## Verses 16 – 17

Lord Krishna said,

***Yoga** is not possible for the one who eats too much or does not eat at all. Nor is it possible for the one who sleeps too much or doesn't sleep at all. 6.16*

*For him who's food and recreation are moderate, who's exertion in his duties is moderate, who's sleep, and waking are moderate, **yoga** destroys all his pain 6.17*

With moderation and other disciplines, one can succeed in meditation. Lord Krishna talks about the state of mind of a successful *yogi*.





## Part IV

# The Nature of Meditation

The one who succeeds in meditation with a controlled mind stands still in the *Atman* (Self). The *yogi* united in the Self without any desires is said to have attained the benefits of meditation. The one who has experienced the bliss of the Self knows there is no greater pleasure. His mind will not attach itself to any pleasure objects. While practising meditation, one will be tempted by the pleasure objects and can be overwhelmed by desires arising in the mind. He has to constantly control his mind. But the one who has succeeded in *nididhyasana* is indifferent to all objects. The success of meditation is said to have been achieved when one stops struggling with his mind.

Though all of us know desires lead to misery, the mind tends to attach itself to the object of desires because of the following reasons:

1. The renunciation is weak.
2. The *samskaras* and *vasanas* are very powerful. *Samskaras* are the mental impressions caused by all thoughts, actions, and intents a person has ever experienced. The tendency to choose objects or experiences of one's desire based on *samskara* is *vasana*.
3. Though one may have attained the knowledge of the Self, he is not steadfast in that knowledge.

The result of meditation is to eliminate all these flaws. On eliminating these, the mind will stabilize on the Self. Lord Krishna says a *yogi's* mind, which is steady in the Self, is like a lamp in a windless place – it does not flicker.

### *Atma is Sat Chit Ananda*

*Atma* is *Satchitananda*. *Sat* means truth, *cit* means consciousness, and *ananda* means bliss.

**Sat:** The *sat* – the existence of the Soul is reflected in all the *jada* (lifeless) objects in this world. The existence of something is the reflection of the Soul's *sat*. For example, a pot made of clay reflects the existence of the clay. It is the *sat* form of clay.

**Cit:** The mind and intellect, which is otherwise lifeless, have the ability to perceive — think, and know due to the reflection of the Soul's *cit*. This is called the *chidabhasa*.

**Ananda:** *Ananda* is bliss. The bliss form of the *Atma* is hindered from one's experience due to the impurities in his mind. A *yogi* who has the knowledge and a calm mind experiences this state of the *Atma* while in meditation.

The mind associates itself with the non-soul, and so it is unable to experience the bliss which is the quality of the *Atma*. When the mind stands steady on the Soul, it experiences the bliss of the Soul.

For one who has experienced the bliss, all other pleasures experienced earlier (or heard about) is a lot inferior to this bliss. The *yogi* who has tasted the bliss will not fall back into delusion. He will not crave to experience the pleasure that arrives from the interaction of the senses and the sense objects, which is a lot inferior to this bliss. His mind does not flicker in temptations. Therefore, he is devoid of all desires.

*One who knows **Brahman** reaches the highest. **Satya** (reality, truth) is **Brahman**, **Jnana** (knowledge) is **Brahman**, and **Ananta** (infinite) is **Brahman**.  
— Taittiriya Upanishad, 2.1.*

## Verses 18 – 19

Lord Krishna said,

*When the controlled mind rests in the Self alone, free from longings and desires, then one is said to have attained **yoga**.* 6.18

*Just like a lamp in a windless place does not flicker, the mind of the **yogi** absorbed in the Self does not waver.* 6.19

### The characteristics of the liberated

The **yogi** who has achieved the goal of **nididhyasana** has attained liberation. There are several definitions for the liberated. Some characteristics of liberated are:

1. **His mind is serene:** The mind by nature wanders. It wanders in matters what it perceives as truth. The mind wanders on subjects it has repeatedly thought about. The tranquillity of the mind can be achieved by controlling the mind through **yoga** practices by changing the habitual thought of **anatma** (non-soul) and bringing the mind to rest on **Atma**. For a **yogi**, his mind rests on the Soul peacefully without effort.
2. **He rejoices in his own Self:** A liberated is happy with himself. He attains bliss, knowing his Soul is everyone's Soul and there is no other. Attaining the **Para Brahman**, he is fully satisfied.
3. **He experiences never-ending bliss:** All joy experienced is attained by one's sense interacting with the sense objects. All such joy has a beginning and an end. Bliss experienced through liberation, unlike other pleasures, is not due to the interaction of senses with sense objects. This bliss is eternal and is achieved without the aid of the senses. As most have only experienced joy from the senses, the bliss from liberation is unknown. The bliss one attains through liberation is not dependent on the senses and, therefore, will not fade away. Only one's intellect is enough to experience this bliss without the senses. This bliss is the fruit of liberation attained by the **yogi**.
4. **He is established in the truth:** We are carried away by the comfort the world offers, like fame, material, wealth, and possessions. The comfort hinders us from seeing the truth about the world — its transience. The liberated, however, is unshakably established in the truth, and he does not slip from it.
5. **He has attained the greatest:** Irrespective of what one achieves, there is always more to achieve, as desires do not have boundaries. Nothing in this world can satisfy one forever. But when one attains liberation, he is fully satisfied, and he knows there is nothing more for him to attain. The mind stops aiming for more. A satisfied mind is a characteristic of the liberated.
6. **He is undisturbed by sorrow:** Sorrow does not disturb the liberated. Sorrow, like pleasure, distracts one from the truth, but it does not have any power over the liberated.
7. **He attains severance from the union with pain:** **Yoga** means the union. Lord Krishna uses the word **yoga** to mean severance from the union with pain. One removes himself from all the pain by attaining liberation.

Lord Krishna lays down these great benefits of liberation in the pursuit to interest Arjuna.

## Verses 20 – 23

Lord Krishna said,

*The mind, restrained by the practice of **yoga**, attains tranquillity. With the tranquil mind seeing the Self by the self, one is fully content with his own Self.* 6.20

*The **yogi** tastes the eternal bliss that transcends the sense organs, which his intellect can grasp. Established in it, he never deviates from reality.* 6.21

*Having attained this state, he knows there is no gain superior to this. Being thus established, he is not shaken even by the worst of sufferings.* 6.22

*Know the state of severance from the union with pain as **Yoga**. Practice this **yoga** with perseverance and with an un-desponding mind.* 6.23

Lord Krishna further details how to perform *nididhyasana*. He says one has to move his consciousness from the *anatma* (non-soul) to *Atma* (Soul).

### **Anatma to Atma**

It may seem obvious that the two steps to move to *Atma* are:

1. First, take the mind from *anatma* (non-soul)
2. Keep the mind focused on *Atma* (Soul)

### **Take the mind from *anatma* (non-soul)**

The *anatma vritti*, or the whirlpool of thoughts about *anatma* is very common for beginners. This is because of the desires in mind. The mind constantly keeps wavering between all its desires.

### **Reasons for desire**

Desires do not occur instantaneously. The root cause of desires is *sankalpa*. *Sankalpas* are continuous thoughts about an object that the object will give one pleasure (or pain).

The attitude to derive pleasure from an object leads to desiring the object. When *sankalpas* strengthen, the desires arise. The reason for *sankalpa* is, however, one's senses. Seeing or hearing about an object can lead to *sankalpa*. Therefore, *anatma vritti* is due to seeing or listening, which leads to *sankalpas*, which lead to desires. The desires lead to thinking about *anatma*.

With the *sankalpas* in mind, if one sits down to meditate, he will only meditate on the objects of his desires. Therefore, one must remove the desires before meditation. The desires also have to be removed from their root in the same way they arise. Lord Krishna emphasizes sense and mind control.

**Dama:** *Dama* is the control of the senses. *Dama* helps in removing the contact between the object and the mind by controlling the senses. One must refrain from seeing, touching or experiencing anything that will not aid one's spiritual progress. By not seeing or hearing what is not required, one cuts off the chances of creating new *sankalpas*.

**Sama:** *Sama* is the control of the mind. The objects themselves do not have power over anyone. Desires are created by contemplating the pleasure one will attain by interacting with the objects. It is important to stop all the thoughts about pleasure objects. Meditating on them leads to the strengthening of the *sankalpas*. *Sama* removes the contact between the mind and the memory of the pleasure objects.

Lord Krishna says one must leave all the desires that arise out of *sankalpa* using

one's own wisdom.

### **Fix the mind on *Atma* (Soul)**

Having taken the mind from *anatma*, one should fix the mind on *Atma* (Self). This is not easy. The mind, by nature, is restless and unsteady. It can neither stand still in *anatma* nor *Atma*.

There are several Upanishads that discuss this process step by step. The consciousness has to be gradually moved from the gross body through the subtle body to the Self. To achieve this, Lord Krishna says one must detach himself from external objects, and by using his wisdom, he should contemplate on the Self. On reaching the Self, one should not get distracted by any other thoughts. It is common for the mind to wander again. In such cases, one must bring the mind back to the Self using one's wisdom.

## **Verses 24 – 26**

Lord Krishna said,

*Abandon all desires born from thoughts and completely restrain the senses by the mind. Slowly and steadily, with the help of the intellect, fix the mind on the Self alone and think of nothing else.* 6.24 – 6.25

*Whenever the restless and unsteady mind wavers, one must bring it back and hold it on the Self alone.* 6.26

Having detailed more about meditation, Lord Krishna talks more about the benefits of meditation.

### **The mind of a *yogi***

The three *gunas* influence everyone's mind:

1. *Sattva guna* is the quality of awareness, calmness, harmony, and purity.
2. *Rajas guna* is the quality of passion, activity, egoism, desire, and drive.
3. *Tamas guna* is the quality of delusion, dullness, inactivity, lethargy, ignorance, and destruction.

All three *gunas* bind one. *Sattva guna* binds one through attachment towards knowledge and happiness. *Rajas guna* binds one through attachment towards action. *Tamas guna* binds one through ignorance and delusion.

Knowledge cannot be attained in *tamas* and *rajas guna*. It can be attained only by being in *sattva guna*. A *yogi* has freed himself from *tamas* and *rajas guna* and has attained *sattva guna*. Having attained knowledge, he crosses over *sattva guna* also. The one who has calmed his mind and attains knowledge becomes one with *Brahman*.

### **The mind of a *yogi* in comparison to a spiritual aspirant**

One who practises *upasan* has discipline but does not have the knowledge of the Self. He thinks of God only during his prayers. The wise with the knowledge of the Self and who, through *nididhyasana*, has eliminated the impurities in him sees the world as God.

The wise cannot lose his knowledge. The knowledge of the Self is very hard to comprehend and acquire but once acquired, it will not leave one. This is the very nature of the knowledge. Lord Krishna says the perfected *yogi* attains bliss through contact with *Brahman* at ease.

*That which is infinite is the source of happiness. There is no happiness in the finite. Happiness is only in the infinite. But one must try to understand what the infinite is.*

— Chandogya Upanishad (7.23.1)

**A *yogi's* view of the world**

Lord Krishna says a *yogi* sees himself in all beings and all beings in himself.

**The wise pots**

There were two wise pots among many pots. The first wise pot said to the second wise pot, *I exist in all the pots*. The second wise pot said, *of course, and all pots exist in me*. When the first wise pot said, *I exist in all the pots*, the pot meant, as clay, it exists in them all. When the second wise pot said, *all pots exist in me*, it meant that the clay is all there is and that the pots are just forms. The first pot sees itself and other pots as *pratyagatman*. *Pratyagatman* is the individual embodied *Atma* (Soul) but knows that the *Atma* in all is the same. The second pot sees itself as the *Paramatma*. *Paramatma* means the Absolute Soul (*Brahman*). The second pot has a non-dualistic vision of the world.

The *yogi* knows he is inside all the beings and that all the beings are inside him. He sees himself in others and others in him. With the knowledge of the Self, he sees only *Brahman* everywhere.

***The infinite is that in which one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, and knows nothing else. But the finite is that in which one sees something else, hears something else, and knows something else. That which is infinite is immortal, and that which is finite is mortal.***

— Chandogya Upanishad (7.24.1)

**The Two birds – From Mundaka Upanishad**

Two birds who were inseparable companions perched on the same tree. One of them ate the fruits of the tree while the other stood still, watching his companion. The bird that enjoyed the fruits was fully engrossed in sorrow. When he turned and looked at his companion, he instantly became free from all his sorrows. The first bird represents the *jiva* (individual Soul). The second bird is the *Paramatman*, God element in all living beings. Metaphorically, this story tells that the individual self is covered in all kinds of desires. He enjoys and suffers based on his *karma*. When the individual self is distracted by the fruits (all kinds of sensual pleasure), he forgets the *Paramatma*. The forgetfulness that separates the *jiva* from the *Paramatma* is *maya* (cosmic delusion), without identifying which the *jiva* falls back into the birth, death, sickness, old age and experiences *samsara*. Once he looks up to his companion (the Lord), his sense of individuality is lost, and all his miseries are removed. He can break through the *samsara* and free himself.

**A *yogi* is never disconnected from God**

A *yogi* who has attained liberation through knowledge sees God in all beings. He worships God through all beings. It is the merit of knowledge and penance that he sees God in all beings. That in itself is the fruit of liberation.

Lord Krishna says the one who sees Him in all beings does not get separated from Him, irrespective of how he lives. Different people are in different situations and places due to their *prarabdha karma*. For a *yogi*, even if his *prarabdha* keeps him in work, that will not hinder his union with *Brahman*.

**Superior of all *yogis***

Lord Krishna says the superior of all *yogis* is the one who sees all beings as himself.

He treats all beings with great compassion and non-violence. A great *yogi* is one who knows whatever is a pleasure for him is a pleasure for all, and whatever is a pain for him is a pain for all, and so he does not cause pain for anyone.

## Verses 27 – 32

Lord Krishna said,

*Supreme bliss comes to the *yogi* whose mind is serene, and his passions are quieted, who is free from impurities and has become one with *Brahman*. 6.27*

*The *yogi*, free from all sins, thus engaged in *yoga*, easily attains the Infinite Bliss of contact with *Brahman*. 6.28*

*United with the infinite and with the vision of equality for everything, he sees the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self. 6.29*

*The one who sees Me in everything and sees everything in Me never gets separated from Me, nor do I get separated from him. 6.30*

*He who is established in Me, worships Me and realizes Me as the all-pervading- is always with Me irrespective of whichever way he leads his life. 6.31*

*Superior of all *yogis* is the one who perceives all pleasure and pain of all as his own. 6.32*





## Part V

# Arjuna's Question

## Verses 33 – 34

Arjuna, who has been listening to Lord Krishna thus far, speaks his mind to Him. Arjuna said,

*This **yoga** of equanimity you described appears unattainable to me because of the restlessness of my mind. 6.33*

*The mind is restless, turbulent, obstinate and very powerful. It appears more difficult to control than the wind to me. 6.34*

Arjuna accepts Lord Krishna's teaching, he is able to understand them, but he is not able to stand still in the knowledge. Arjuna, who is a great warrior and who has learned and mastered the art of weaponry with extreme discipline, is, stating that his mind is very hard to control. Then one can imagine the plight of others with lesser discipline.

Arjuna is a representation of most of us. Most are unable to control their minds. Therefore, this question is relevant to all of us as much as it is to Arjuna. Arjuna defines his mind as:

1. Restless
2. Turbulent
3. Obstinate
4. Very powerful

**Restless:** The mind does not stay still in any object. Most of us do not realize it as we have not attempted to calm our minds down or meditate.

**Turbulent:** The mind constantly attacks everybody with attachment, aversion and other emotions. These emotions create agitations in the mind and the body.

**Very powerful:** The mind is very powerful as it overpowers the intellect and destroys one's power of discrimination.

**Obstinate:** It is very firm in its nature and hard to change.

Firstly, when a student discusses his concerns with a teacher, the teacher must acknowledge and assure the student that he has understood his concerns. Secondly, Arjuna may think that it is only his mind that is hard to control. To address this, Lord Krishna replies to Arjuna that He agrees with him that his mind is indeed hard to control and comforts him by saying that it is the nature of the mind to be restless and wander. He tells Arjuna that everyone's mind is indeed the same. He advises how to control the mind slowly and steadily. The mind is hard to control because:

1. The mind is subtle.
2. It is the nature of the mind.
3. The mind has always been the subject.
4. The mind has always been left untamed.

**The mind is subtle:** It is easier to control gross objects. As the subtleness of the object increases, the power of the object increases. It is, therefore, easier to discipline the



body than disciplining the breath, and it is easier to discipline the breath than disciplining the mind.

**Nature of the mind:** The senses and the mind, by nature, are oriented towards the external world. It is the nature of the mind to wander among external pleasure objects. It requires effort to turn them away from their nature.

**The mind has always been the subject:** The "I" has always been understood as the mind and the body. One sees himself as the mind rather than seeing the mind as an external instrument. The mind has to be understood as an external object (instrument) to be controlled.

**The mind has always been left untamed:** The mind has always been left to its nature and has not been tamed. Therefore, it is very hard to begin controlling the mind. The sooner one realizes and starts to control, the easier it will be.

### **Attitude to approach the mind**

1. One must approach the mind for meditation, knowing that it is hard to control the mind. All those who have succeeded in *yoga* have also struggled.
2. One should know that a lot of self-effort is required. In many other areas, one may attain success with the help of others or their own *prarabdha karma*, but controlling the mind is not one of them.

Having detailed more about the mind and how to approach it, Lord Krishna details how to control one's mind. The same is also mentioned in Patanjali's yoga sutras. The two important aspects of controlling the mind are:

1. Renunciation (*Vairagya*)
2. Consistent practice (*Abhyasa*)

We saw the two steps to *nididhyasana* are to remove the consciousness from the *anatma* (non-soul) and keep it on the *Atma* (Self). The first step of removing consciousness from the non-soul is achieved only through renunciation.

### **Renunciation**

We hold objects dearly because we have assigned values to them. The higher the values we have assigned to the objects or people, the more they can affect us. By assigning high values, we approve them to control us. Similarly, when we do not see any value in something, that object or person will not affect us.

To renounce an object, we must remove the value from the object. This does not mean building aversion towards it, but it is being indifferent to it. By removing the values from objects or people, we free ourselves from them. We essentially renounce them. An object is no more an object of contemplation in our mind. For example, when we discard something that is no longer needed, we do not contemplate it. It is discarded and forgotten. We do not call this a sacrifice, and it is not. Renunciation is also not a sacrifice. Renunciation is the understanding that the object is no longer needed.

The mind wanders in external objects because of the value it has given them. When the value is removed, the object is no longer the subject of its interest.

### **Building dispassion**

There are several methods mentioned in the scriptures to build dispassion. A few are:  
**See the flaws:** When we look at an object, the mind only sees the pleasure the object can bring us, and we get attached to the object. The intellect does not see the aftermath of the pleasure, which is sorrow inflicted by the object.

When we see a pleasure object, we should also see the sorrow it will inflict. This is discriminative power. Any object that gives pleasure also gives sorrow. When one renounces joy from an object, he also renounces sorrow from it.

**See the flaws continuously:** Though at times we see the sorrow an object can cause, we do not remember it for long. The discrimination made is soon forgotten, and we go back to that object. This will cause sorrow again. We should renounce the pleasure objects through constant discrimination and intellectually understanding their nature.

**See the transience:** One must understand that any object is transient, and it will cause sorrow. The objects can create bondage and enslave us. The mind goes to the objects that it has not renounced. Renunciation reduces the impurities of the mind.

The next step after renunciation is practice. One must practice standing still on the Self.

### Constant practice

The mind that is removed from the objects should be focused on the Self. This is hard and can be attained only by practice. Any art is mastered only through practice, and so is meditation.

In meditation, the mind has to be given a task, and one should protect it from slipping away. The mind will slip away, but with practice, one must bring it back to the object of meditation. The only way to attain success is to consistently practice it for a long period without losing the vehemence.

#### Steps to control the mind

Renunciation

Consistent practice

## Verses 35 – 39

Lord Krishna said,

*Undoubtedly, the mind is restless and very hard to control, but it is possible with practice and detachment.* 6.35

*Yoga is difficult to attain for the one who is not self-controlled. But for the one who strives to restrain the mind, it is possible to attain by practice.* 6.36

Although Arjuna understands it is possible to control the mind, he feels overwhelmed by the nature of his mind and lacks confidence about succeeding on this path. He understands that, eventually, he has to renounce actions and solely be in *nididhyasana* (meditation) to attain the union with *Brahman*.

He wonders what happens to those who fail after renouncing actions and digressing from the common ways of life. For as long as one is on the path of action, he reincarnates based on his merits and demerits. He wonders if he will perish on the path of renunciation if he fails to attain liberation. Arjuna said,

*He who, with faith, engages in yoga practice but, due to the lack of self-control is unable to accomplish the goal of yoga in this life- what is his destiny?* 6.37

*Having deviated from the path of action and having fallen from meditation, does he not perish like a scattered cloud?* 6.38

*Please dispel this doubt of mine completely, for no one other than you can.* 6.39

Arjuna asks what happens to one who is not successful on the path to liberation due to reasons like:

1. If one's effort is not enough.
2. If his *vasanas* (tendencies) distract him.
3. If there are any other hindrances.
4. If his *prarabdha karma* is over before he attains union with *Brahman*.

Lord Krishna assures Arjuna that there is no destruction for an unsuccessful *yogi* in this or in the next world. Lord Krishna, in reply to Arjuna's questions, elucidates the path of an unsuccessful *yogi* by comparing it with other people. The three types of people he talks about here are:

1. The liberated
2. The ordinary
3. The unsuccessful *yogi*

**The liberated:** The liberated (*jivanmukta*) is one who has obtained the knowledge of the Self and has succeeded in union with *Brahman*. He stays in his physical body until he has the *prarabdha* to do so. He neither awaits death nor is afraid of it. After death, he becomes *videhamukti* (liberated after death). His path cannot be tracked like the fish in the water after his demise as he becomes the all-pervading *Brahman*.

**The ordinary:** The ordinary people are the majority of people. They may or may not be leading a righteous life. In general, they do not have the knowledge of the Self or an inclination towards attaining it. They may also be in the ritualistic path of worship. These people accumulate merits if they live righteously. Because of their merits, they go to upper abodes (heavenly worlds) after leaving their physical body and experience joy and will eventually take birth based on their *sanchita karma* (the sum-total of all actions done by the one during all previous births). The ones on the path of unrighteousness will go to the lower abodes after death and will experience sorrow until they are reborn based on their *sanchita karma*.

The ordinary people may take birth as a human or other lower life forms (plants, animals, etc.). Many think that humans are always reborn as humans. This is not correct. One's rebirth is based on what manifests out of one's *sanchita karma*.

**The unsuccessful *yogi* (*yogabhrasta*):** *Yogabhrasta* means one who has fallen from the practice of *yoga*, but because of his merits, he gets another chance to establish the union with *Brahman* through a birth conducive to his spiritual development. Lord Krishna details the plight of an unsuccessful *yogi* in three aspects:

1. The merits
2. The next birth
3. The circumstances of his rebirth

**The merits:** Even without performing (good) actions, a *yogi* attains merits by learning about the Self from the scripture and practising austerities.

**The next birth:** The *yogi* who knows the Self attains a higher abode after death and rejoices in the presence of higher beings. He lives there until the merits of the previous life last. Lord Krishna assures Arjuna that the *yogi* is reborn as a human only. The merit of his penance subsides any other *sanchita karma* from manifesting and enables him to take a human form, as liberation is possible only through human birth.

**The circumstances of his rebirth:** The circumstances in which the *yogi* takes birth will depend on the level of his progress. Attaining dispassion is very difficult. One who has attained dispassion will not have to re-attain it, and the one who has slipped away from the union only due to the lack of dispassion will be given a chance to build dispassion through his discriminative power.

- **The *yogi* without dispassion**

The *yogi* who has fallen out due to the lack of dispassion will be born into a pious and prosperous family. By being born into a wealthy family, he will get a chance to indulge and understand that it does not satiate him, and he will soon yearn for permanent bliss. He will be born in circumstances where he will be able to continue his practice from where he left in his previous birth. He will carry forth his state of mind from his previous incarnation's practice. The perfected qualities remain intact in him, and he will not have to begin all over again. There will be no hindrances to his progress, and being born into a wealthy family, he will not have to engage in actions merely for his

survival.

- **The *yogi* who has attained dispassion**

Lord Krishna says the *yogi* who has attained dispassion and sense control, has come a long way, but for some reason, his life has ended just short of liberation. Such special beings take birth in the house of enlightened *yogis* who are materially poor but rich in wisdom. Being materially poor is very supportive for one's dispassion and other penances. Lord Krishna says such births are very rare as only a very few are enlightened, and even fewer are in a household setting (*grihasta ashram*). Being born in such settings, the *yogi* will have a very conducive environment for his journey right from birth.

***He becomes *Brahman*, who knows *Brahman*. No one ignorant of *Brahman* is born in his family. He transcends grief and crosses all the sins. Freeing himself, he attains immortality.***

***-Mundaka Upanishad (3.2.9)***

Being born this way, the *yogi* is pulled onto this path even without his knowledge. These *yogis* are born, and they grow up like other ordinary people. But because of their strong mental imprints (*samskaras*), they will soon be drawn onto this path and progress drastically.

Some may just begin on this path out of curiosity but very soon cross over the *karma kanda* (ritualistic practices mentioned in the Vedas) to the *jnana kanda* (philosophies of Vedas). Lord Krishna says this *yogi* is superior to all the other *yogis*, who either haven't attained the knowledge of the Self or have the knowledge but are not working towards attaining union with it.

Lord Krishna concludes this by chapter saying that the one who seeks Him, knowing He is the Absolute Reality, will eventually attain Him.

#### Different people and their paths

The liberated	The ordinary	The unsuccessful yogi
The jivanmukta (liberated while alive) becomes Brahman after death.	The ordinary people go to abodes based on their merits after death.	The yogi attains merit by learning about the Self.
His path cannot be tracked.	They experience the abodes until their merits / demerits last.	He takes birth again only in a human form.
There is no more birth or death for him.	They are then reborn based on their sanchita karma.	He will be born in a conducive environment for his development and attain liberation by striving diligently.
	They may or may not get a human birth.	

## Verses 40 – 47

Lord Krishna said,

***There is certainly no destruction for him either in this world or in the world beyond. One who strives for liberation will not suffer a bad fate.*** 6.40

***Having fallen from *yoga* he goes to the abode of the virtuous. Residing there for many years, he takes birth again in a pure and prosperous family.*** 6.41

***Or (if he has already attained dispassion) he is born in a family of enlightened *yogis* rich in wisdom. Such a birth is very difficult to attain in***

*this world.* 6.42

*Having taken such a birth, they revive the wisdom attained in their previous lives and strive even more strenuously towards perfection in **yoga**.* 6.43

*The strength of the former practices draws him on the onward path. Even one who just wishes to know **yoga** surpasses the rituals prescribed in the Vedas.* 6.44

*By striving diligently, he clears himself of all material attachments and attains the fruits of many births of **yoga** practices and finally attains the Supreme.* 6.45

*The **yogi** is superior to people engaged in severe austerities, people with knowledge, and people in action. Therefore, strive to be a **yogi**.* 6.46

*And among all the **yogis**, the one whose mind is immersed in Me, who is devoted to Me and who worships Me with faith, I regard him as the highest of all.* 6.47



**Aum Tat Sat**

# Summary

## Part I – Introduction to Meditation

- *Dhyana* means meditation; they are practices to perfect the mind.
- Meditation is not an instrument for knowledge. But by meditating, one attains the competency for knowledge of the Self.
- The goal of meditation is to attain qualification for knowledge and to establish a union with it. Anything that comes as a byproduct of meditation without any effort should not be made the goal of meditation.
- Meditation is broadly classified into *upasanas* and *nididhyasanas*
- *Upasanas* are the preparatory meditations to attain the knowledge of the Self.
- The four types of *upasanas* are Relaxation meditation, Concentration meditation, Expansion Meditation, and Value Meditation.
- Relaxation meditation: The two actions to perform in this meditation are to separate oneself from the mind and acquaint oneself with one's own mind.
- The goal of relaxation meditation is calming the body, senses, breath, and mind, to know that the mind is an instrument, separate from oneself.
- Concentration meditation: In this meditation, the mind is kept focused on a chosen object without any other distractions during the entire period of meditation.
- Ways to concentrate: *manasa puja* (mental worship), *manasa parayana* (mental chants), *manasa japa* (meditating on the chosen form of God).
- Expansion meditation: The goal of this meditation is to widen one's consciousness.
- Value meditation is performed to cultivate good values like speaking the truth, practising non-violence, involving in charity, etc. Value meditation is meditating on the values one intends to acquire and retain.
- *Nididhyasana* is the meditation practice that is to be performed after attaining the knowledge of the Self to establish with the knowledge.
- *Nididhyasana* is necessary so that one does not slip back into identifying with his body and mind.
- *Upasana* has certain mandatory rules one has to follow; for *nididhyasana*, there aren't any.
- The subject of meditation for *upasana* is *Saguna Brahman*, which is *Brahman* with *gunas* (attributes) — God (*Ishvara*). The subject of meditation for *nididhyasana* is *Nirguna Brahman*, *Brahman* without *gunas*.
- *Upasana* can result in material well-being if that is one's motive. When done without any desire, it qualifies one for knowledge. The result of which is *jivanmukti* (achieving liberation while alive).
- To control the mind, one has to perform *upasana* and to contemplate on the Soul, one has to perform *nididhyasana*.
- Meditation, in general, is very hard to perform. In the beginning, one has to prepare for the meditation itself. Patanjali, the author of yoga sutras, defines steps to prepare the mind and the body for meditation.
- Patanjali yoga sutras: *yama* — actions one must not do, *niyama* — habits one must cultivate, *asana* — body postures, commonly known as yoga poses, *pranayama* — breath control exercises, *pratyahara* — the control of the sense organs, *dharana* — focusing the mind on the chosen object for contemplation, *dhyana* — meditation, *samadhi* — oneness with the object of meditation.

## Part II - The *Yoga* of Meditation



- Yoga sutra broadly classifies preparation for meditation as external aid (*bahiranga sadhana*), internal aid (*antaranga sadhana*)
- External aid is how one leads his life. What he does throughout the day determines the quality of the result one will attain from meditating. External aid for meditation is *karma yoga* and self-effort
- One who desires to enter *dhyana yoga* but is not qualified for it must perform *karma yoga* to attain the qualification. One who has achieved the qualification for *dhyana yoga* must leave all actions (*karma*) to reach the ultimate goal.
- The characteristics of one qualified for *dhyana yoga* are: he is devoid of desire, has control of the senses, and is not attached to actions.
- Internal aid is about the details of meditation, its rules, and other conditions to succeed in it.
- The fruit of meditation is liberation — the benefits of which are seeing the Self clearly, experiencing non-duality, being satisfied and remaining unshaken.

### Part III - Directions for the Practice of *Yoga*

- Internal aid for mediation includes finding a suitable place in seclusion, having the right frame of mind, maintaining correct posture, keeping the mind calm, removing fear, maintaining the vows of celibacy, keeping the mind under control, and keeping the focus on *Ishvara* to attain Him.
- Another external aid to meditation is moderation in food, sleep, recreation and rest.

### Part IV - The Nature of Meditation

- The mind tends to attach itself to the object of desires because of the following reasons, the renunciation is weak, the *samskaras* (mental imprints) and *vasanas* (tendencies) are very powerful, though he may have the knowledge of the Self, he is not steadfast in that knowledge.
- The characteristics of the liberated are his mind is serene, he rejoices in his own Self, he experiences a never-ending bliss, he is established in the truth, he has attained the greatest, he is undisturbed by sorrow, he attains severance from union with pain.
- To perform *nididhyasana*, one must move his consciousness from the *anatma* (non-soul) to *Atma* (Soul).
- To move from *anatma* one must remove desires. The root of desires is *sankalpa*. *Sankalpas* are continuous thought about an object that the object will give one pleasure (or pain).
- To remove desire, Lord Krishna emphasizes sense and mind control.
- Lord Krishna says a *yogi* sees himself in all beings and all beings in himself.
- Lord Krishna says the superior of all *yogis* is the one who sees all beings as himself. He treats all beings with great compassion and non-violence.

### Part V – Arjuna's Question

- Arjuna says he is unable to control his mind and defines his mind as restless, turbulent, obstinate and very powerful.
- The mind is hard to control because the mind is subtle, it is the nature of the mind, the mind has always been the subject, the mind has always been left untamed.
- The two important aspects of controlling the mind are: renunciation and consistent practice.
- Methods to build dispassion are to see the flaws, to see the flaws continuously, and to see the transience.



- Arjuna asks what happens to an unsuccessful *yogi*. Lord Krishna assures Arjuna that there is no destruction for an unsuccessful *yogi* in this or in the next world.
- Lord Krishna says that an unsuccessful *yogi* will take birth in an environment conducive to his spiritual development.
- Lord Krishna concludes this chapter by saying the one who seeks Him, knowing He is the Absolute Reality, will eventually attain Him.

# Chapter 7

## Jnana Vijnana Yoga



The second section of the Gita begins from this chapter. The emphasis is on understanding *Ishvara* — the manifested God. Lord Krishna explains to Arjuna both the transcendental as well as the immanent aspects of Himself as *Ishvara*. He describes the manifestations as His lower and higher nature. This chapter also focuses on *bhakti yoga* — the *yoga* of devotion. Lord Krishna discusses several forms of devotion and teaches Arjuna the highest form of devotion which leads to the union with *Brahman*.



## Part I

# *Ishvara's* Nature

Lord Krishna declares that He will impart Arjuna the knowledge of His real nature and His manifestations. He says His real nature can be understood only by those who are:

- Devoted to Him,
- Involved in *jnana yoga* — learning the Upanishads.
- Surrendered onto Him.

When Lord Krishna refers to Himself, it means one of the following based on the context going forward:

- **Krishna:** Born in a human form and a friend of Arjuna.
- **Vishnu:** Lord Krishna is an *avatar* (incarnation) of Vishnu.
- **Ishvara:** The manifested Lord — *Saguna Brahman* (*Brahman* with attributes, the three *gunas*). The ruler of the world.
- **The Absolute:** *Nirguna Brahman* (*Brahman* without attributes)

Although there are many similarities between *Ishvara* and an *avatar*, their roles are different. *Ishvara* is the God of creation. *Ishvara* is the leader of all the demigods and the ruler of the world. An *avatar* is a descent — a manifestation to preserve the created world.

One attains the full knowledge of the divine by attaining knowledge of both *Nirguna Brahman* (pure consciousness) and *Saguna Brahman* (manifested God).

Lord Krishna says, through His discourse, Arjuna will attain both knowledge (*jnana*) and wisdom (*vijnana*) about Him. *Jnana* means knowledge, and *vijnana* means wisdom. *Vijnana* is experiencing the knowledge attained. For example, *jnana* is to know that fire can be made from wood. *Vijnana* is making fire from wood and experiencing its heat and light.

Lord Krishna says *Ishvara* is the reason for the world, and by knowing Him, there is nothing more to know. If the clay is the reason for all the pots, then if one knows the clay, then he knows all the pots. He says this knowledge is sparse as only a few even attempt to attain it, and even fewer succeed.

## Verses 1 – 3

Lord Krishna said,

*Hear from Me how, when the mind is attached to Me, taking refuge in Me and following the path of *yoga*, you will, without a doubt, know Me fully.* 7.1

*I shall give you the knowledge and wisdom about Me, knowing which there is nothing more to be known by you.* 7.2

*Among thousands, perhaps one aspires for perfection; even among those successful aspirants, one knows Me as I am.* 7.3

Lord Krishna explains to Arjuna His transcendental and immanent nature.

### ***Ishvara's Nature (Ishvara Swaroopa)***

*Ishvara* is the manifestation of *Brahman* with Its power of *maya* (delusion). To understand the nature of *Ishvara*, we should understand the nature of *Brahman* and *maya*.

#### ***Ishvara is anadi***

Both *Brahman* and *maya* are called *anadi*. *Anadi* is that which does not have an origin but has always existed. *Ishvara*, which is *Brahman* and *maya*, is *anadi*.

#### **Differences between *Brahman* and *maya***

- *Brahman* is pure consciousness, while *maya* is *jada* (lifeless).
- *Brahman* is unchanging (*nirvikara*), *maya* is changing (*savikara*).
- *Brahman* does not have any attributes (*nirguna*); *maya* has the three *gunas* — *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*. Therefore, *maya* is referred to as *saguna* (with attributes) or *triguna* (three *gunas*).
- *Brahman* is independent, *maya* is dependent on *Brahman*.
- *Brahman* is the everlasting truth, *maya* is a delusion.

*Ishvara* being both *Brahman* and *maya*, is the cause of the creation of the entire world.

### **Creation**

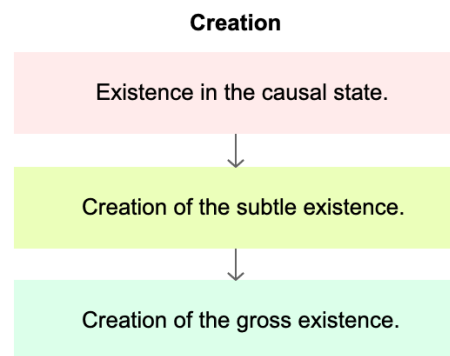
Creation is a manifestation of the unmanifest. Everything created already exists in its unmanifest state. Nothing new is made when we say creation. Creation is just a change in the states of existence. Manifestation is like unfolding a carpet, while unmanifest is rolling the carpet back in. According to the scriptures, the universe did not sprout out entirely in an instant. The creation has been said to have happened in many steps. The simplified generic steps of creation are:

1. Existence in the causal state
2. Creation of the subtle existence.
3. Creation of gross existence.

#### ***Sankhya philosophy of creation***

*Sankhya* is one of the Hindu schools of philosophy, founded by sage Kapila. Though we will not get into details of this philosophy, we will look at their theory of creation as it is similar to that in the Gita. *Sankhya* philosophy suggests that creation happens in steps and that there are 24 *tattvas* (elements or aspects) to creation, the 25<sup>th</sup> being *Purusha*.

*Purusha* is the Cosmic consciousness. It is the illuminator and changeless. It is the spirit. *Purusha* is considered the masculine element of all beings.



***Splendid and without a bodily form is this *Purusha*, without and within, unborn, without life-breath and mind, higher than the supreme element. From him are born life-breath and mind. He is the soul of all beings.***

***- Mundaka Upanishad***

*Prakriti* is material in nature with the three *gunas*. It is the feminine aspect of existence. The steps of creation are:

#### **Step 1: *Mula Prakriti***

*Mula prakriti* can be translated as "the root-substance". It is defined as the fundamental matter. Being an aspect of the Absolute, it is the pre-cosmic root-substance which is the substratum of all the matter there is. *Prakriti* consists of the three *gunas* — *sattva*,

*rajas*, and *tamas*, in a state of equilibrium.

### Step 2: *Mahat*

*Mahat* is the first primordial matter made from *prakriti* and *Purusha*. The equilibrium (of the *gunas*) is disturbed, and creation happens when *prakriti* comes in the proximity of *Purusha*. Disturbed from its state of equipoise by the proximity of *Purusha*, *prakriti* undergoes transformation and creates *mahat* or *buddhi*. *Mahat* is the first product of evolution, and it consists of the three *gunas* of *prakriti* in disequilibrium.

*Mahat* is also referred to as the cosmic intellect, and so it is referred to as *buddhi* (intellect) in the Gita. It is a state of awareness without ego. *Mahat* is the faculty of discrimination. It contains the subtle essence of all that is to be manifested.

### Step 3: *Ahamkara*

From *Mahat* evolves the sense of ego, which is called the *ahamkara*. The "I am" and "mine" that differentiate one from another. This is the stage of separation.

### Step 4:

Until *ahamkara*, the evolution happens in steps — one after the other. After *ahamkara*, the evolution happens in parallel.

### The creation of the *bhootas* and the other elements

The *sattva guna*, along with the action from *rajas guna*, is responsible for the evolution of eleven elements which are the mind, the five senses organs — ear, eyes, nose, skin, and tongue, and the five action organs — hands, legs, the instrument of procreation, the instrument of elimination, and the instrument of speech.

*Tamas guna* with *rajas guna* is responsible for the creation of *tanmatras*.

### *Tanmatras*

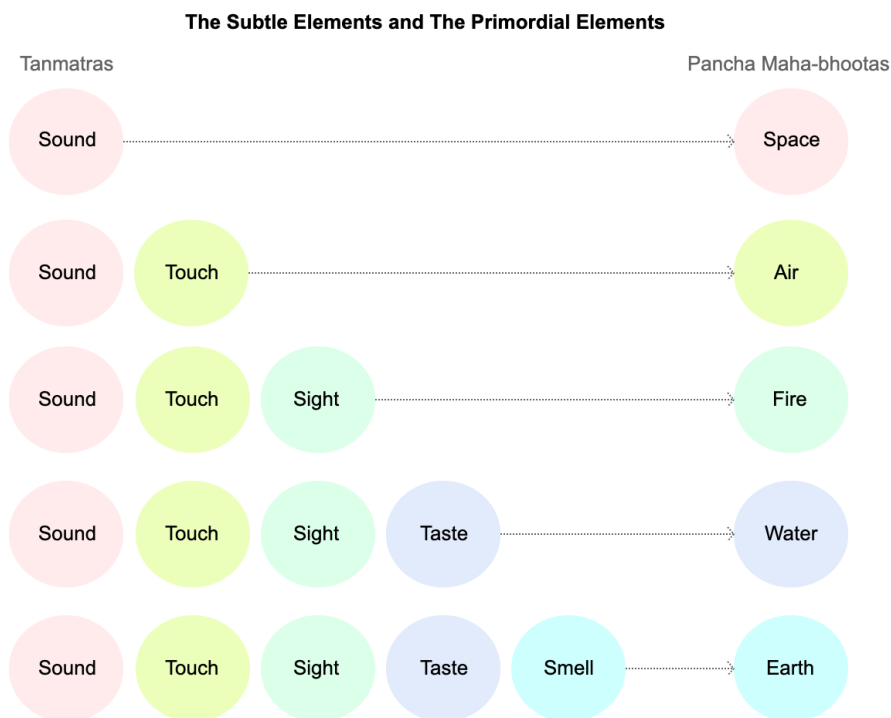
*Tanmatras* are referred to as *sukshma bhootas* in the Vedanta, which means subtle rudimentary elements. The *tanmatras* are the basis for all the gross existence. The five *tanmatras* of the senses are sound, touch, sight (or form), taste, and smell. These, under different combinations, produce the gross elements which can be perceived by the senses.

The gross elements arising out of the *tanmatras* (*sukshma bhootas*) are called the *pancha maha-bhootas* — the five primordial elements. They are space, air, earth, water, and fire. The five primordial elements are tangible and can be perceived by the senses.

Basically, the five non-physical elements give rise to the five knowable physical elements which can be physically discerned. The five primordial elements and their primary subtle rudimentary elements are:

- space from sound
- air from touch
- fire from sight
- water from taste
- earth from smell

Each element is related primarily to one *tanmatra* but contains a portion of all the previous *tanmatras*. For example, the sound is sensed through space. The air can be sensed through sound in addition to its primary subtle element — touch. The fire can be sensed through sound and touch, along with its primary subtle element — sight. Similarly, the water can be sensed through sound, touch, and sight, along with its primary subtle element — taste, and the earth by sound, touch, sight, and taste in addition to its primary subtle element — smell. It may appear that some gross manifestations can be perceived through other senses also. For example, it may appear that the water may be sensed with the smell also, but that is only because of the earth's presence in it. Pure water cannot be perceived by smell.



*Prakriti* (*maya*) is the causal universe, from which the subtle universe comes out and then the gross. *Maya* is *anadi*. It does not have a beginning; the causal universe also does not have a beginning. The subtle and gross universe has a beginning and an end.

#### The 25 elements of creation

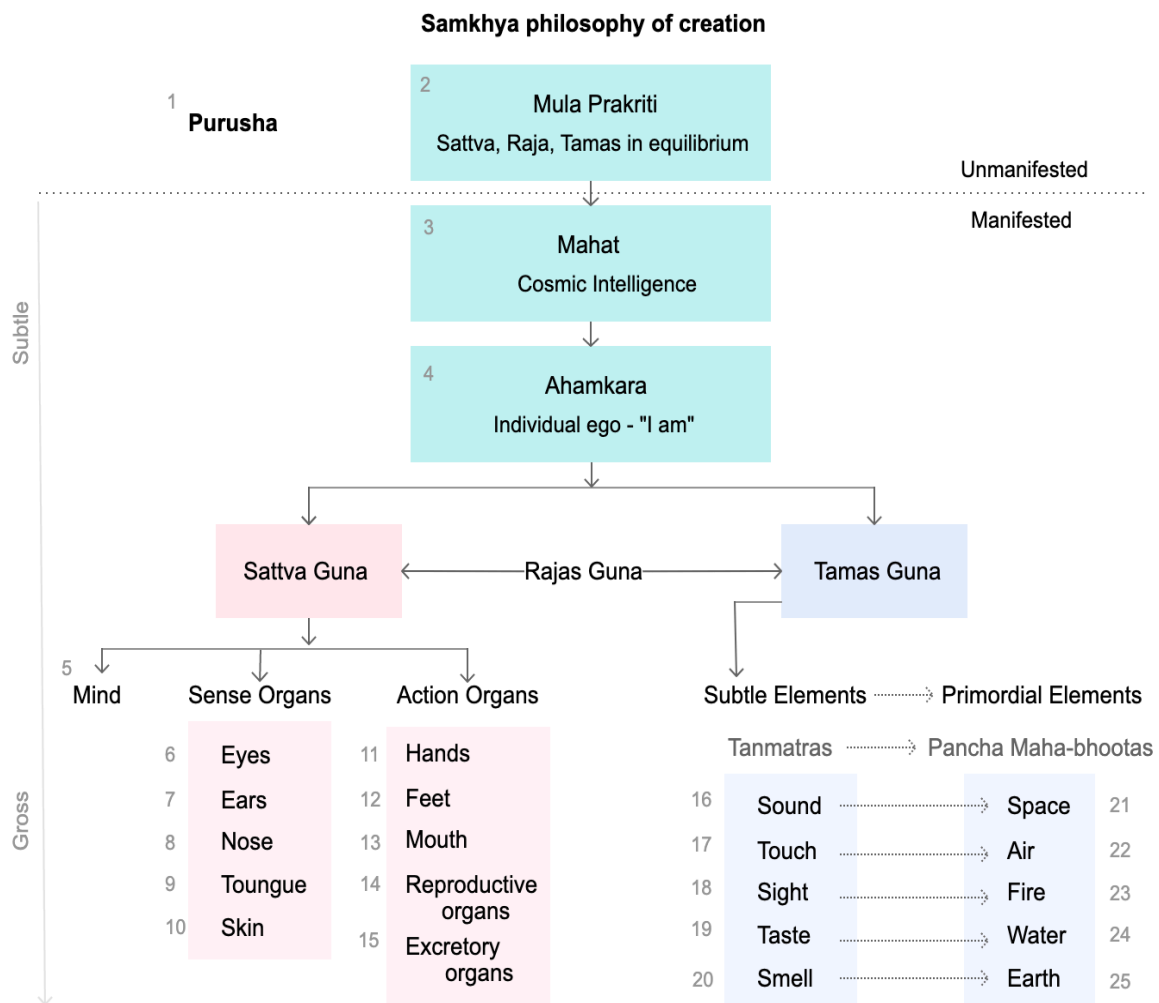
1	Purusha (Pure Consciousness)
2	Prakriti (The Root-Substance)
3	Mahat (The Cosmic Intelligence)
4	Ahamkara (The Individual Ego)
5	The Mind
6-10	The Sense Organs
11-15	The Action Organs
16-20	The Tanmatras (The Subtle Elements)
21-25	The Pancha Maha-bhootas (The Primordial Elements)

Lord Krishna consolidates the detailed creation by explaining the steps in which creation occurs involving eight elements, which are:

### The 8 elements of creation

1	Prakriti (The Root-Substance)
2	Mahat (The Cosmic Intelligence)
3	Ahamkara (The Individual Ego)
4-8	The Suksma bhootas (The Subtle Elements)

Lord Krishna refers to *prakriti* as His lower nature and *Purusha* as His higher nature and discusses their roles in creation.



### The higher and the lower nature

For any creation, there will be a reason and a result. *Karana* is the reason or the cause for the creation, and *kariya* is the result. For example, when a pot is made from clay. The clay and the potter are the reasons for the pot to exist (the *karana*). The pot is the result of the creation (the *kariya*). The pot initially existed as clay. The clay is the causal state of the pot. The potter created the pot in his mind, which is the subtle creation, and it was made into a pot, which is the gross creation. As with the example of the pot, we can see there are two causes/reasons (*karana*) for its creation:



1. The clay: The material cause.
2. The potter: The intellectual cause

Creation happens only if there are these two reasons to cause it.

### **The two causes of creation**

1. The material cause (*upadana karana*)
2. The intellectual cause (*nimitta karana*)

**The material cause (*upadana karana*):** The material out of which the object is made is the material cause of that object. The material cause of the universe is *prakriti*, which Lord Krishna refers to as His lower nature. It is called *apara prakriti*. *Apara* means inferior; it is that which binds us (*maya*). In general, the material cause is *jada* (lifeless).

He says His *prakriti* attains eightfold separation during creation. These eightfold separations are the eight elements of creation which are *prakriti*, *mahat*, *ahamkara*, and the five subtle elements (*sukshma bhootas*).

**The intellectual cause (*nimitta karana*):** The consciousness which illuminates the otherwise lifeless (*jada*) creation is the intellectual cause. Lord Krishna says His higher nature is *Purusha* (*Brahman*). *Purusha* is the intellectual cause of all creation. It is also referred to as *para prakriti*. *Para* means higher. The intellectual cause is pure consciousness.

In general, these two causes of creation are not the same. For example, the clay is different from the potter. However, according to the scriptures, the only reason for the creation is *Ishvara* (God). We can understand this statement by using an example of a spider. A spider creates its web by itself, from itself. The spider is both the material cause and the intellectual cause of its creation.

*As a spider projects and withdraws its thread, as the plants grow on earth, as the hair grows on the body, the universe emerges from the Imperishable.*  
- Mundaka Upanishad 1.1.7

*Ishvara* manifests everything in the universe by Himself and from Himself. *Ishvara's* lower nature (*prakriti*) is the material cause of the creation, and His higher nature (*Purusha*) is the intellectual cause of the creation.

*In the beginning, all this was non-existent (as the gross universe). From it was born what exists. That created Itself by Itself; therefore, It is called the self-made.*  
- Taitreya Upanishad 2.7.1

**The characteristic of the causes:** The three aspects of existence are creation (*srishhti*), sustenance (*sthiti*), and dissolution (*laya*).

**The material cause:** The material cause is responsible for all three states of existence: creation, existence, and dissolution. The pot is created out of clay; the pot exists as long as the clay exists. When the pot is destroyed, it goes back to existing as clay.

**The intellectual cause:** The intellectual cause is responsible only for the creation. The potter is responsible for the creation of the pot. After the pot is made, the potter is not required.

### The Characteristic of the Causes

- Material cause - Responsible for creation, existence, and dissolution
- Intellectual cause - Responsible for creation.

### Dissolution

After the universe has become gross, it eventually collapses and dissolves. There is no real loss of material; it is a transmission from one state to another state. The manifested becomes unmanifest until another manifestation.

During dissolution, the universe is rolled back to existence in its causal form. Once again, from dissolution, the creation happens, manifesting the subtle and the gross forms.

During dissolution, everybody's *karma* (merits and demerits), *vasanas* (tendencies), and *samskaras* (mental imprints) lay dormant in the causal universe, waiting to be expressed once the subtle body acquires a gross body. This is the cycle the universe undergoes. *Pralaya* means dissolution. *Pralaya* is achieved when *maya*'s three *gunas* attain equilibrium.

*That from which all things are born and in which they live and that into which having departed they enter. Aspire, O men, to know That. That is Brahman.*  
- Taitreya Upanishad 3.1

Lord Krishna says all that is created, even the *jada* (lifeless), is because of His *para prakriti* (higher nature) and *apara prakriti* (lower nature). He says He is the reason for their sustenance and destruction. Also, being the material cause, there is nothing apart from Him in the entire manifestation.

*In Me, all are born; in Me, all things firmly stand, in Me all attain dissolution. I am that One (Brahman), without a second.*  
- Kaivalya Upanishad

## Verses 4 – 7

Lord Krishna said,

*Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intellect, and ego are the eight components of My manifested nature. 7.4*

Lord Krishna uses the term *ahamkara* (ego) for the term *prakriti* used in *Sankhya* philosophy, *buddhi* (intellect) for *mahat* and *manas* (mind) for *ahamkara*, the earth and other elements in this context refers to the subtle rudimentary elements (*tanmatras*) which are responsible for the creation of the gross elements.

*This is My inferior nature. Beyond it is My higher nature, the consciousness by which the universe is sustained. 7.5*

*Understand that these two natures of Mine manifest everything. I am alone, the cause of creation, and into Me, it dissolves again. 7.6*

***There is nothing higher than Me. Everything depends on Me like beads strung on a thread.*** 7.7

Having explained His nature, Lord Krishna shows a few examples from His manifestations to help Arjuna grasp his discourse.



## Part II

# *Ishvara's* Manifestations

### Everything is God

If a pot is made of clay, when we interact with the pot, we interact with the clay. Similarly, if the entire world is *Ishvara*, we interact with Him when we interact with the world. However, most of us do not perceive all manifestations as *Ishvara* because of our emotions associated with different objects and people. We fear certain objects or people; others trigger anger or hatred in us. We perceive all that is created by putting them through our emotions.

Though one may know that everything is *Ishvara*, the knowledge alone will not translate into wisdom as one's emotions are on the way. When one has attachment and aversion to the world, he cannot see the world as *Ishvara*.

One must not subject the world to different emotions like fear, anger, attachment, aversion but practice seeing everything as *Ishvara*. To integrate one's mind and one's knowledge, Lord Krishna gives a few examples of His manifestations.

## Verses 8 – 12

Lord Krishna said,

*I am the taste of water, the radiance of the sun and the moon. I am the sacred **Om** - the fundamental vibration in all the Vedic mantras; I am the sound in ether and the masculinity in men.* 7.8

*I am the pure fragrance of the Earth, the luminescence in the fire. I am the life in all beings and the austerity in the ascetics.* 7.9

*Know Me as the eternal seed of all beings that exist; I am the intelligence of the intelligent and the bravery of the brave.* 7.10

*In the strong, I am the strength that is free from longings and attachment; I am the desire in men, which is unopposed to **dharma**.* 7.11

*Know that all things that are pure (**sattva**), active (**rajas**), and inert (**tamas**) are manifest from Me. Though they are in Me, I am beyond them.* 7.12

### Reason for *samsara*

Everything in the world can be split into two, *jada* (lifeless) and consciousness. Everything is *para prakriti* — the truth and *apara prakriti* — the delusion. *Samsara* (the cycle of death and rebirth) is because of the absence of discrimination between the two.

Lord Krishna says that because of his lower nature, all people are deluded in the world. When deluded, the intellect is lost. When something has attracted one into delusion, the intellect stops working. The world is very attractive and beautiful until one understands its true nature. Therefore, people are deluded by it; and because of the

delusion, they do not know Him as *para prakriti*. Intellect is lost in delusion, and discretion is lost with it. People, therefore, do not know what is real and what is not. Delusion (*maya*) is the reason for *samsara*.

He says *maya* is very hard to cross. Many do not know the hardship as they have not even tried to cross it.

#### The characteristics of *maya*

1. *Maya* is that which does not exist. For example, the absence of light is darkness. Darkness itself is not an object. Darkness can be removed by light. Similarly, ignorance is the lack of knowledge. *Maya* is ignorance.
2. *Maya* is dependent on *Ishvara*; without *Ishvara*, there is no *maya*, but without *maya*, *Ishvara* exists as *Nirguna Brahman*.
3. *Maya* has three *gunas- sattva, rajas, and tamas*.
4. *Maya* is tough to overcome.

Though termed as an illusion, *maya* is experiential, like the water mirage, which is neither real nor not real. The water mirage cannot be classified as sand. For it were, it should be called sand. It is not water either. *Maya* is similar to a water mirage.

*Maya* has no beginning, as time itself comes from *maya*. *Maya* is unthinkable as all the thoughts are also from it. *Maya* is indescribable, as all the descriptions are also from it. *Maya* is, therefore, inexplicable.

While we dream, everything in the dream appears real, emotions, people, and other objects. While dreaming, we do not know we are dreaming, and our experiences seem real. However, when we wake up, the dream does not exist anymore, and we realize it was just an experience and that it was not real.

*Maya* is like a dream. While experiencing *maya*, we cannot disregard it as unreal. However, when one realizes *Brahman*, one can differentiate the Absolute truth from the experiential transience.

*Maya* has two powers, which are:

1. The power of concealment (*Avarana shakti*)
2. The power of projection (*Vikshepa shakti*)

*Maya*, with its concealment power, hides the higher nature (*Para prakriti*). The ignorance of the existence of the higher nature (*Para prakriti*) is *samsara* (the cycle of death and rebirth).

*Maya* is very powerful and cannot just be overcome by oneself. Lord Krishna says His *maya* can be overcome only with His help. He says one must fully surrender to Him to cross *samsara*.

#### Total surrender (*Saranagati*)

*Saranagati* means surrender. It refers to total surrender to God. In general, many have strong egos, and it is common to think, "I did," "I am solely responsible for the outcome." When one encounters some issues in one's path, he thinks only he can overcome them by himself.

Realizing there is a greater power beyond one's ego and surrendering to it is *saranagati*. Knowing one's body, mind, and intellect alone is not enough for one to get through *samsara* is surrender. Surrender is not an act; it is an attitude.

#### What surrender is not?

- Surrender is not a replacement for one's effort. It is not the transfer of one's responsibility to God but accepting one's responsibility and working towards it. It is seeking protection for the successful completion of one's work while he makes the required efforts for it.
- Surrender also does not mean the surrender of one's free will. One must perform only righteous tasks using his free will.
- Surrender is not to suppress one's intellect. It is to use one's intellect and study and understand the scriptures.

- Surrender is not to lose confidence in oneself but to believe in oneself and know that he needs God's support to cross over *maya*.

An example of surrender is Arjuna pleading to Lord Krishna for guidance. Arjuna realized he could not remove his sorrow and therefore surrendered to Lord Krishna for guidance. Arjuna had Lord Krishna by his side when he needed guidance, but others do not have Lord Krishna physically present by our sides to guide us. For all others, the Vedas are the guide. Living according to them ensures a righteous way of life. Following Vedas essentially means following *Ishvara*.

Lord Krishna broadly splits all people into His followers and non-followers. The followers are those who lead a righteous life, and the non-followers are those who do not. He describes the characteristics of the non-followers.

#### **The characteristics of the non-followers**

1. **Deluded:** The deluded are the ones who do not know the real from the unreal. When they do not know the higher nature of God, they do not surrender.
2. **Those without discrimination:** The ones who have sinned a lot have depleted their discriminative capabilities by sinning. When discrimination is lost, they do not seek God.
3. **The ignorant:** For some, their knowledge is covered by delusion (*maya*). They do not know about their Self. The lack of knowledge prevents them from surrendering to God.
4. **The lowly people:** When one's *gunas* are predominantly in *rajas* or *tamas*, they exhibit characteristics like cheating and betrayal that are lower in nature. They have to come to *sattva* to seek God.

Having the qualities of demons, like violence, the non-followers do not seek God, but they follow the ways of the demons.

## **Verses 13 – 15**

Lord Krishna said,

*Deluded by the three modes of *maya*, the world does not know Me as the imperishable, other than them (the three modes).* 7.13

*The divine illusion of Mine with the three *gunas* is hard to overcome. But those who take refuge in Me cross over it easily.* 7.14

*The deluded, the ignorant, those lacking discrimination and the lowly people, following the ways of demons, do not surrender unto Me.* 7.15

Having talked about the non-follower, Lord Krishna describes His followers.



## Part III

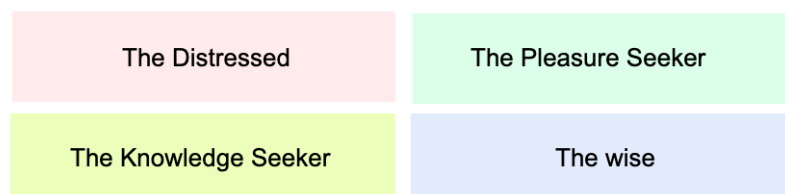
# Types of Devotees

## The types of devotees

Lord Krishna categorises His followers into four categories:

1. **The distressed:** Some resort to God only when they are in the middle of distress. They pray to remove the situation that troubles them. The reason for their prayer is to relieve them from the unpleasant situation they are in. The distress can be illness or loss, and they desire to escape it.
2. **The pleasure seeker:** These people have crossed the first stage, which is showing devotion only during distress. They show devotion even when they are happy. Their goal is to enjoy pleasure here in this world and the following other worlds. They are certain that to fulfil their desires, they need the support of God. Their prayers are intended to attain their material desires and experience all kinds of pleasure.
3. **The knowledge seeker:** These are people interested in liberation and not interested in pleasure objects. They are looking for the knowledge of the Self and intend to attain union with *Brahman*.
4. **The wise:** They are liberated and have the knowledge and wisdom of the Self. They know they are that *Brahman*.

### Types of Devotees



Though all the followers are on the righteous path, Lord Krishna says the wise one's devotion is superior to all. For the distressed and the pleasure seekers, the goal is other than God. They use God as the means to achieve their goals. For the knowledge seeker, both the goal and the means to their goal is God; however, he sees himself as a separate being different from God.

The wise one's devotion is undivided as he sees himself as God and his means and goal are also God. Therefore, the devotion of the wise is superior to them all.

### The wise are rare

The wise, having attained the knowledge, understand the value of surrender. Lord Krishna says it takes many lifetimes for one to attain knowledge and surrender unto Him.

There are several forms of God based on one's culture. One shows devotion naturally to a particular form of God for which he has developed devotion through many years of practice by regarding that form/forms as God.

The wise, however, shows devotion to everything he sees around him, knowing



they are God. It takes several incarnations for one to see everything as God. Therefore, the wise who have achieved this is superior.

## Verses 16 – 19

Lord Krishna said,

*Four types of virtuous men worship Me, the distressed, the seekers of knowledge, the seekers of pleasure, and the Self-realised. 7.16*

*Of them all, the wise who is fully absorbed in Me and worships Me with knowledge, I consider him the highest. I am very dear to them, and they are dear to me. 7.17*

*Indeed, noble are all these men, but I deem the wise steadfast in knowledge as My own Self, for he is established in Me, having Me alone as the Supreme goal. 7.18*

*After many births, the wise surrenders unto Me, realizing that I am all there is. Such a great soul is very rare. 7.19*

Lord Krishna talks more about his devotees and states that even though some devotees have desires, they are still on the right path. He also discusses the nature of desire further.

### Devotees with desire

Lord Krishna says his followers with desires — the distressed and the pleasure seekers, worship the demigods to attain their desires without the knowledge of the Absolute. He says their intellect is stolen from them by their desires. Their discrimination is deprived, and they do not know what is real and what is not. They do not know what is good for them and what is not.

Goddess Saraswathi and Goddess Lakshmi



*Ishvara* is all there is and is responsible for the world. The scriptures define *Ishvara's* power as His features, and each of His power is referred to with a different name and form. For example, Goddess Saraswathi is the representation of knowledge, learning, wisdom, music, and art. Goddess Lakshmi is the goddess of prosperity, wealth, and abundance.

The devotees with desire do not know the truth about God, nor are they interested in knowing. Their eyes are on material objects, and they use devotion as a means to achieve their material goals. They are, in reality, devoted to the prosperity they attain by worshipping the deities.

Though they worship different deities, they do not know that *Ishvara* is the all-pervading and that all the deities are only the forms of the Supreme Lord.

Different people worship different demigods based on their nature (*gunas*). They practice different

rituals and different penances based on their nature.

### Building Faith

Lord Krishna says irrespective of how or which form the devotees with desires worship, being the all-pervading *Ishvara*, he creates faith in them. He grants their wish through the deities they worship and builds faith in the worshippers, as even though

they have desires, they try to attain them righteously. Eventually, by being on the righteous path, they will understand that their desires do not satisfy them and will soon take the path to liberation.

From childhood, we are trained to worship a particular form. We may feel the protection and divine love on seeing that form. We develop devotion to the desired deity, and only eventually do we learn that He/ She is all there is. If one lives righteously, *Ishvara* will build faith in that desired God. If one acquires merits by leading a virtuous life, he will soon attain the real knowledge about the desired God, that He/ She is all there is.

Lord Krishna (as *Ishvara*) alone gives the fruits of one's *karma* and grants one's desire. He grants everyone's wishes based on their capacity and what is right for them. An ordinary man lives a life of desires, and not all desires are necessarily good for him. They do not aim to attain God but use Him as a means to attain different objects. When one desires too much, he has to be in action all his life; there is no other choice for him. Lord Krishna talks about the flaws in attaining one's desires.

### Results of attaining the desired

Any desire that has been attained has an end, and anything attained is subject to destruction. There are also other flaws mentioned in the scripture about attaining the desired objects. Some of them are:

1. Though it may be pleasant to attain the desired objects, it will not satisfy one forever.
2. **Desire creates bondage:** The more one acquires objects, the more one will be dependent on them and will lose the ability to live without them. Desire creates weakness and bondage. The ones on the material path think attaining more materials is progress, while the ones on the spiritual path know that renouncing more is progress.
3. **Waste of time:** Many *gurus* consider material achievement as a waste of effort and time. To attain and maintain success, one has to put forth a lot of effort and time. Material success does not guarantee satisfaction. Therefore, many on the spiritual path think that effort and time should be used wisely for higher goals. This does not mean one must not work for well-being. Well-being is required for the sustenance of one's body and mind, which is necessary for liberation. However, one must not confuse the goal with the instruments. Material success is an instrument and should not be made the goal of one's life.

#### Results of Attaining the Desired

All objects of desire are subject to destruction.

Attaining the desired will not satisfy one forever.

Desire creates bondage.

Chasing only material pursuits is a waste of time.

Lord Krishna says it is very superficial to desire material well-being alone. Those who desire so, lack the understanding and their intellect lacks the capacity to ask for better.

Though they have many desires in them, they are still on the right path as they do not achieve it through unrighteousness. For that reason, they attain the higher abodes (heavenly realms) of their deities after death, and His devotees who know His real nature attain Him (*Nirguna Brahman*) after death.

## Verses 20 – 23

Lord Krishna said,

*Those whose intellect has been stolen away by desires worship deities by practising various rituals led by their natures to attain their objectives. 7.20*

***Whatever form a devotee worships with faith, I steady his faith in that form.***  
7.21

***Endowed with faith, he worships that form and attains his desires, but I grant him his desires in reality.*** 7.22

***Verily, the fruit gained by these people of small minds is finite. Those who worship the deities go to the deities, while My devotees come to Me.*** 7.23

As it is not easy to grasp His higher nature, many are content with praying to the deities for material well-being. Having said that His lower nature deludes all people, Lord Krishna details His higher nature and why many do not understand. He states four characteristics of His higher nature.



## Part IV

# Higher Nature

## The characteristics of the higher nature (*Para prakriti*)

- **Unperceivable:** We have the capability to perceive only those that have been manifested. The higher nature of the Lord, which is in the unmanifest state of existence, cannot be perceived by any of our senses. The higher nature of the Lord is the perceiver in all of us and, therefore, cannot be perceived.
- **Always existent:** The higher nature is the highest truth there is, which is changeless and ever-presents
- **Indestructible:** For anything, destruction occurs either internally or through an external factor. Diseases are an example of the internal destruction of a body. Natural calamities are examples of external destruction. The all-pervading *Brahman*, which is everything, does not have an internal or external and is indestructible.
- **The highest one can attain:** Liberation is the highest human goal. There is nothing greater to attain than the higher nature of the Lord.

The Characteristics of the Higher Nature

Unperceivable	Always existent
Indestructible	The highest one can attain

*Beyond the senses are the objects; beyond the objects is the mind; beyond the mind, the intellect; beyond the intellect, the great *Atman*, beyond the great *Atman* is the unmanifested (*avyakta*). Beyond the unmanifested is the *Purusha*; beyond *Purusha*, there is nothing, that is the end, that is the highest goal.*

*-Katha Upanishad 3.10-3.11*



## Cosmic illusion (*Yogamaya*)

Lord Krishna says it is difficult to understand His Higher nature because of *yogamaya*. *Yoga* means union, and *maya* means illusion; *yogamaya* is the union of three *gunas* (*sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*) of *maya*, which causes the illusion.

*Yogamaya* shields one from the truth so much that even when seeing or interacting with an object, one does not understand its true nature. This is like a child getting scared of a toy lion. The child can only see the form, which is the lion but is unable to see that it is made of wood. The form conceals the real nature of the object. When the lion is seen, there is no wood, and when the wood is seen, there is no lion.

Through the power of *maya*, everyone only is deluded by the form without knowing the underlying truth. *Maya* hides our vision, like the cloud hiding the sun. The sun is always shining, yet one cannot see it because of the clouds. Though everything is God, we see only the form, not knowing their real nature. All beings only see the lower nature of God, and therefore His Higher nature stays hidden.

#### **The creator knows His creations**

Lord Krishna says being the reason for all creations, He knows all His creations, but the individual beings do not know Him or His other creations. For example, the potter knows all his pots, but the pots do not know the other or its creator.

The intellect that is illuminated by the Absolute Consciousness does know it. The knower is not known.

Being the all-pervading consciousness, He knows the past, present, and future. Our minds are restricted. He is the *samasti* (collective) and knows all the *vyasti* (individuals). We, being the *vyasti*, do not know the *samasti*.

#### **Deluded by the pairs**

Everything in this world seems to have opposites like heat and cold, honour and dishonour, good and bad, truth and lies, etc.

The world itself does not exist with these dualities. Dualities are a perception based on one's attraction and aversion. The dualities cause turbulence in one's mind. We are all born with attraction and aversion, and this is *samsara*.

#### **Break free from *samsara***

Lord Krishna concludes the chapter by once again emphasizing virtuous living. He says this path leads to Him.

The ones who take up a righteous living will attain merits, which remove attachment and aversion from one's mind. When the dualities are removed from the mind, the intellect regains its power.

When there is a mistake in one's decision, it is due to his attachment to something. When the attachment (or aversion) is removed, the intellect regains its power of discrimination, which is otherwise clouded by the dualities. When the intellect is undistorted, the goal becomes clear. One is drawn to the path of Self-realization. Everything starts with righteous living. In simple terms, it is *karma yoga*. Lord Krishna introduces Arjuna to seven new concepts the wise are aware of, which are:

1. *Brahman*
2. *Adhyatma*
3. *Karma*
4. *Adhibhuta*
5. *Adhidaivata*
6. *Adhiyajna*
7. *Prayana kala smarana*

The next chapter begins with Arjuna asking Lord Krishna about them and Lord Krishna explaining it to him.

## **Verses 24 – 30**

Lord Krishna said,

*The unwise regard Me as the unmanifest coming into manifestation, not knowing My supreme, immutable, and imperishable nature. 7.24*

*I am not revealed to all veiled by My *Yogamaya*. The deluded do not know Me as the birthless and eternal. 7.25*

*I know the past, present, and future of all living beings. However, Me, no one knows.* 7.26

*All beings are deluded right from birth by the pairs of opposites arising out of their attachment and aversion.* 7.27

*Those who engage in pure deeds, having destroyed their sins, are freed from the pairs of dualities. They worship Me with determination.* 7.28

*Those who take refuge in Me for liberation from old age and death know **Brahman**, **Adhyatma**, and **karma**.* 7.29

*Those who know Me as the **Adhibhuta**, **Adhidaivata**, and **Adhiyajna** know Me even at the time of death* 7.30



**Aum Tat Sat**

# Summary

## Part I – *Ishvara's* Nature

- Lord Krishna declares that He will impart Arjuna the knowledge of His real nature and His manifestations.
- He says His real nature can be understood only by those who are: devoted to Him, involved in *jnana yoga* and those who have surrendered unto Him.
- One attains the full knowledge of the divine by attaining knowledge of both *Nirguna Brahman* (pure consciousness) and *Saguna Brahman* (manifested God).
- Lord Krishna says *Ishvara* is the reason for the world, and by knowing Him, there is nothing more to know.
- *Ishvara* is the manifestation of *Brahman* with his power of *maya* (delusion).
- *Ishvara* is *anadi*. *Ishvara* being both *Brahman* and *maya* is the cause of the creation of the entire world.
- Creation is a manifestation of the unmanifest. Everything created already exists in its unmanifest state.
- Manifestation can be imagined as unfolding a carpet, while unmanifest is rolling the carpet back in.
- The simplified generic steps of creation are — existence in the causal state, creation of the subtle existence, and creation of the gross existence.
- *Sankhya* philosophy suggests that creation happens in steps and that there are 24 *tattvas* (elements or aspects) to creation, 25 being *Purusha*.
- The 25 *tattvas* (elements) of creation are: *Purusha*, *prakriti*, *mahat*, *ahamkar*, the mind, the five sense organs, the five organs of actions, the five *tanmatras*, the five *pancha maha-bhootas*
- Lord Krishna consolidates the detailed creation by explaining the steps in which creation occurs involving eight elements, which are: *Prakriti*, *mahat*, *ahamkara*, and the five *sukshma bhootas*
- The two causes of creation are: the material cause (*upadana karana*), and the intellectual cause (*nimitta karana*).
- The material cause is called *apara prakriti* — lower nature. The intellectual cause is called *para prakriti* — higher nature.
- The material cause is responsible for all three states of existence: creation, existence, and dissolution. The intellectual cause is responsible only for the creation.
- Lord Krishna says all that is created, even the *jada* (lifeless), is because of his higher and lower nature).

## Part II – *Ishvara's* Manifestation

- Though one may know that everything is *Ishvara*, the knowledge alone will not translate into wisdom as one's emotions are on the way. When one has attachment and aversion to the world, he cannot see the world as *Ishvara*.
- *Samsara* (the cycle of death and rebirth) is because of the absence of discrimination between the two *prakritis*, the higher nature and the lower nature. Delusion (*maya*) is the reason for *samsara*.
- Surrender is an attitude one must build. To cross *samsara*, one must surrender to God.
- The four types of non-followers are the deluded, those without discrimination, the ignorant, and the lowly people.

## Part III - The Types of Devotees



- The four types of devotees are: the distressed, the pleasure seeker, the knowledge seeker, and the wise.
- For the distressed and the pleasure seekers, the goal is other than God. They use God as the means to achieve their goals.
- For the knowledge seeker, both the goal and the means to their goal is God; however, he sees himself as a separate being, different from God.
- The wise one's devotion is undivided as he sees himself as God and his means and goal are also God. Therefore, the devotion of the wise is superior to them all.
- The wise, having attained knowledge, understand the value of surrender. Lord Krishna says it takes many lifetimes for one to attain knowledge and surrender to Him.
- The wise show devotion to everything they see around them, knowing they are God. It takes several incarnations for one to see everything as God. Therefore, the wise who have achieved this is superior.
- The devotees with desire do not know the truth about God, nor are they interested in knowing. Their eyes are on material objects, and they use devotion as a means to achieve their material goals. They are, in reality, devoted to the prosperity they attain by worshipping the deities.
- Lord Krishna (as *Ishvara*) alone gives the fruits of one's *karma* and grants their desire. He grants everyone's wishes based on their capacity and what is right for them.
- When one desires too much, he has to be in action all his life; there is no other choice for him.
- Results of attaining the desired: all objects of desire are subject to destruction, though they may be pleasant to attain, they will not satisfy one forever, desire creates bondage, desire for material pursuits is a waste of time.

#### **Part - IV – Higher Nature**

- The higher nature is unperceivable, always existent, indestructible, the highest one can attain.
- Lord Krishna says it is difficult to understand His higher nature because of *yogamaya*. *Yoga* means union, and *maya* means illusion; *yogamaya* is the union of three *gunas* of *maya*, which causes the illusion.
- *Yogamaya* shields one from the truth. Through the power of *maya*, everyone only is deluded by the form without knowing the underlying truth.
- Lord Krishna concludes the chapter by emphasizing virtuous living.

## Chapter 8

# Akshara Brahma Yoga



Lord Krishna explains the seven terms - *Brahman*, *Adhyatma*, *Karma*, *Adhibhuta*, *Adhidaivata*, *Adhiyajna*, *Prayana kala smarana* to Arjuna. He explains how one must depart one's body during death and what his last thoughts must be as they determine one's rebirth. This chapter is a deviant from other chapters which glorify *jivanmukti* (liberation when alive). This chapter talks about *krama mukti*, which is liberation in steps as a possibility after departing right. Lord Krishna talks about *samsara chakra* and how the embodied goes around for

eons in *samsara* helplessly bound by their actions and declares that the only way to break the cycle is through liberation.



## Part I

# Introduction

The concepts of *samsara* (the cycle of death and rebirth) and *moksha* (liberation) have been explained in the earlier chapters. The two types of liberation discussed so far are *jivanmukti* (achieving liberation while alive) and *videhamukti* (liberation after death).

*Jivanmukti* itself has been glorified, and the characteristics of one who attains it has been discussed several times. The ways and steps to attain *jivanmukta*, which are through *karma yoga* and *jnana yoga*, have also been discoursed through the Gita and will be in the later chapters also. However, this chapter is deviant. In this chapter, we will learn about *krama mukti*.

*Krama mukti* is another type of liberation. Although it is also liberation, it is not an ideal way of liberation. And even though there is a chapter dedicated predominantly to *krama mukti*, it is not advised as the ideal path. It is an option and therefore discussed in this chapter. In the earlier chapter (chapter 6), two types of meditation were discussed, which are:

- *Upasana*
- *Nididhyasana*

### *Upasana*

*Upasanas* are the meditation practices performed to attain the competency to understand the teachings. They are preparatory meditations to attain the knowledge of the Self. They are done before *sravana* (*sravana* is listening to the teacher until one understands).

### *Nididhyasana*

*Nididhyasana* is the meditation practice that is to be performed after attaining the knowledge of the Self to establish with the knowledge. *Nididhyasana* is the meditation in which the knower and the known become the same.

*Upasanas* have rules one must abide by, but for *nididhyasana*, there aren't any conditions or rules.

This chapter details *upasanas* and its results. Lord Krishna details *Ishvara* (*Saguna Brahman*), *upasana* (meditation on God with forms) and, thereby, how one attains *krama mukti* through it. He also discusses another important concept called *antha kaala smarana*, basically how one must depart from his body during death. Lord Krishna says when one leaves his body with the thought of *Ishvara*, he attains Him after death. The four main benefits of *upasanas* are:

1. **Qualification to understand the truth:** When *upasanas* are done without desire, it qualifies one for the knowledge of the Self. That is, when one listens to the scriptures, he will be able to understand their meaning. It enhances one's discrimination, renunciation, and control over the senses and mind. By attaining knowledge, one will eventually qualify for liberation.
2. **Material well-being:** Most people do not perform *upasanas* without desires. Most worship Gods to attain material benefits or to remove their sorrow or distress. They do not crave truth. When these people perform *upasanas* with desires, they attain material well-being. The more *upasana* one does, the more

comfort one attains in this world.

3. **Attainment of higher abode:** There are several higher abodes one can attain after death, *Brahmaloka* being the highest of all. *Brahmaloka* is where one can attain maximum pleasure and comfort within *samsara* (the cycle of death and rebirth).

As long as one's merits (from the performed *upasanas*) last, he experiences *Brahmaloka*, and when the merits get over, he is born again as a *samsari* to experience his *karma*. Experiencing the highest pleasure attainable is one of the benefits of *upasanas* (meditation).

4. **Liberation in *Brahmaloka*:** Some, on the path of *upasana*, might have also attained renunciation and discrimination to a certain level.

As a result of one's dedicated and persistent practice of *upasana*, he attains merits, which manifests as a comfortable living in this abode and after death, they go to higher abodes. When they go to the abode of Brahma (*Brahmaloka*), and they renounce the pleasures there, they attain qualification for *Brahma jnana* (the knowledge of *Brahman*).

By attaining *Brahma jnana* and establishing with that knowledge with various dedicated penances there, they may attain liberation there and will not be born again. This liberation is called *krama mukti*.

### *Krama mukti*

*Krama* means step by step. *Mukti* means liberation. *Krama mukti* means liberation in steps or progressive liberation.

*Krama mukti* is liberation in *Brahmaloka*. Brahma is the creator God in Hinduism. He is also one of the *Trimurtis* — the three supreme Gods of Hinduism. The other two are the protector God — Vishnu, and the destroyer God — Shiva. *Brahmaloka* is considered the abode of Brahma.

The four-headed Brahma



*Krama mukti* is an option for those who choose the path of knowledge but fail to attain liberation in their lifetimes. An unsuccessful *yogi* has two options to attain liberation:

1. He can either attain *krama mukti* in *Brahmaloka* after his death.

2. Or he will take birth as a *yogabhrasta*. *Yogabhrasta* is one who has fallen from the practice of *yoga*, but because of his merits, he gets another chance to pursue his spiritual goal and establish a union with *Brahman* through a human birth conducive to his spiritual development.

As *krama mukti* is a chance for those who failed to attain *jivanmukti* (achieving liberation while alive), aiming for *krama mukti* is attempting to fail *yoga* here. There is no point in trying to fail in something one is pursuing with dedication and determination. Therefore, *krama mukti* is not a recommended path. It is only an alternative to being born as a *yogabhrasta*. Our aim, however, should be to attain *jivanmukti* in this lifetime.

Lord Krishna concluded the previous chapter by saying the wise know the definition of the seven terms below:

1. *Brahman*
2. *Adhyatma*
3. *Karma*
4. *Adhibhuta*
5. *Adhidaivata*
6. *Adhiyajna*
7. *Prayana kala smarana*

## Chapter 8

This chapter begins with Arjuna asking Lord Krishna for an explanation.



## Part II

# Arjuna's Questions

## Verses 1 – 2

Arjuna said,

*O Supreme Lord, what is **Brahman**, what is the **Adhyatma**, and what is **Karma**? What is **Adhibhuta**, and who is **Adhidaivata**? Who is **Adhiyajna**? and how are You to be known at the time of death (**Prayana kala**) by the self-controlled?* 8.1-8.2

Lord Krishna, in reply to Arjuna, encapsulates how the wise understand these terms. **Brahman**: The wise understand **Brahman** as the indestructible Supreme. They understand the nature of **Nirguna Brahman** (**Brahman** without attributes, without **Maya**).

**Adhyatma**: **Adhyatma** is the individual Soul that illuminates the gross and the subtle body. The wise understand the individual Soul as one's true nature. The one who knows **Brahman** also knows that **Brahman** is **Atman** (Soul).

**Karma**: **Karma** means action. In this context, the sacrifices (**yajnas**) are referred to as **karma**. The sacrifices which cause the origin of all beings are called **karma**. It is the virtue of **karma** that all creation, animate and inanimate, come into existence. The offering of oblations creates rain, and from rain the food, and from food the beings. **Karma** creates an inevitable cycle of birth and death and keeps one in **samsara** (the cycle of death and rebirth). The wise know **karma** as actions that bind one. The wise use actions only to attain the purity of mind and knowledge.

**Adhibhuta**: The five primordial elements called the **pancha bhoota** (space, air, fire, water, earth) is also called **adhibhuta**. The wise understand that anything made of elements is subject to destruction, and therefore, all manifests are destructible, including their gross body, subtle body, this world, and the entire universe.

**Adhidaivata**: **Adhidaivata** is that which precedes all Gods and deities. It is the Supreme deity — the active principle in the creation of material objects. That which Different energies are represented as a God (demigod) or a deity in the scriptures and that which stands as a witness to them all is the **Adhidaivata**.

**Adhiyajna**: Lord Krishna says He is the witness inside everybody, and it is Him who bestows the rewards for everyone's actions.

**Prayana kala smarana**: Lord Krishna teaches how to depart this world. He says the last thoughts of the dying person determine his next birth and that one's most prominent thought occupies his mind during the time of his death.

Many practice **upasanas** (meditations) mostly for material well-being. Those who meditate without desire attain knowledge because of the merits of performing these practices. Very few among these pursue the path of liberation and, with great penance, attain it while alive. Most others, due to some hindrances on their spiritual path, may not attain the knowledge of the Self and, therefore, do not attain liberation. They will depart only as **upasakars** (performers of **upasanas**, worshippers) and not as a **mukta**

(liberated).

For those who have not attained liberation after performing the *upasanās*, Lord Krishna teaches a certain approach through which he can reach *Brahmaloka*. He lays them as rules that are necessary to follow to attain *Brahmaloka*.

The most important rule of them all is to depart thinking of the deity of their *upasana* (meditation). When one passes on from this world with the thought of the *Saguna Brahman* (manifested God) of their meditation, they will attain *Brahmaloka* and could eventually attain *krama mukti*.

## Verses 3 – 4

Lord Krishna said,

*Brahman is the Imperishable Supreme. Adhyatma is Brahman dwelling in each body; it is called the individual Soul. Action is the offering of the oblation, which is the reason for the origin and sustenance of beings.* 8.3

*That which is perishable and underlies all the manifestations is Adhibhuta; Purusha — that presides over the demigods, is called Adhidaivata; I am the Lord of all sacrifices who dwell in every being's heart, I am called Adhiyajna.* 8.4





### Part III

## The Nature of the Mind

Lord Krishna says, whatever one thinks and leaves the body, he attains that alone in his next birth.

Our state of consciousness at the time of our death determines our next birth. Thus, if one's consciousness is absorbed in God at the moment of death, he attains Him. As a rule, one attains what one is absorbed in during death.

### Can one think of God just during death?

Lord Krishna says one cannot lead his life any way he wants and think of God only during his last days. Because the most prominent thought of one will occupy the mind at the time of death. This can be understood if one understands the nature of the mind.

### The nature of the mind

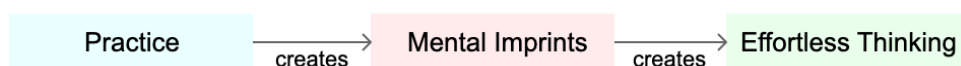
One's nature is created by oneself with effort. That which one constantly thinks about becomes his nature. One's current state of mind is the consequence of all the thoughts he has had, all that he has heard and contemplated and how he has lived so far. One's mind is, therefore, the consequence of one's past and will subsequently become how he shapes it now. The mind is the reflection of one's lifestyle. We create our minds through *abhyasa*. *Abhyasa* means practice. From *abhyasa*, the *samskara* (mental imprints) and *vasanas* (tendencies) are formed. Anything we think about continuously creates our imprints and tendencies.

The mind is like the gross body, which is more flexible earlier in life. The mind is easier to tame when younger. The mind loses the power to think and form new imprints as it ages along with its gross body. Therefore, it is necessary to tame the mind and to think of good thoughts from early on in life to create good imprints. If the mind is left untamed for long, it is not possible to control it in later years. Then only the mind will control one. In old age, the mind will only be able to think of thoughts that were created out of practice which are its imprints. The way the mind works in steps are: 1. Practice (*abhyasa*) 2. Mental imprints (*samskaras*) 3. Effortless thinking.

We all certainly want to think or not think of certain thoughts. However, the thoughts we get in our minds are beyond our control. We get to know our thoughts only after our mind has thought them. The thoughts keep appearing via our mental imprints (*samskaras*) of what we have been continuously thinking about. The thoughts that come up in our minds, good or bad, are due to our practices.

Normally, the mind and body are weaker at the end of one's life. At this time, most people do not have the power to think and practice new thoughts. Only our mental imprints will surface in the end. Therefore, one must practice thinking of God early in life to be able to think of God during the time of death. Without knowing this, many people resort to philosophy only in their later ages.

### The way the mind works in steps



### **The Story of Jada Bharata**

Bharata was a king who renounced his kingdom to become an ascetic. He retired to a forest where he lived and worshipped the Lord. One day he saw a fawn near its dead mother. Out of compassion for the newborn, he took it to his hermitage and took good care of it. Soon he developed an attachment towards the fawn. With time he became old and was on his deathbed. Being there, he was constantly thinking of the deer out of attachment. Bharata was reborn as a deer. And due to his strong past mental imprints, he followed a sage and lived in seclusion near their hermitage. And it is said that in his following birth he was born as a human and attained liberation.

The story is an example of attachment and thereby losing the goal. It portrays what one thinks about in one's death bed is what he will attain after death. If our last thoughts determine the next birth, our lifestyle determines our last thoughts.

#### **Instrument vs goals**

When we use God as an instrument to attain our desires, we have more attachment towards our desires than towards God. The instrument does not occupy the mind, but the goals do. If we think of God always but as a means to attain our goal, our goal will be our last thought.

#### **How should one think of God?**

The two conditions to remember God during the last days of one's life are:

1. One has to think of God his entire life.
2. One should think of God as the goal and not as a means to attain other goals.

One has to think about God without other desires.

It is for this reason it is important to practice *dama* (control of sense organs) and *sama* (control of the mind) and get the mind under control early on. The unwanted thoughts should be removed as and when they appear. If they are left unattended one will no longer have the power to remove them when they get stronger through mental imprints.

***He who broods on objects of desire is born here and there because of his desires.  
But for him, whose desires have been fulfilled and who is Self-realized, all desires  
dissolve here.***

***-Mundaka Upanishad 3.2.2***

Lord Krishna asks Arjuna to think of Him and fight. For Arjuna, fighting is his duty, therefore for others, it must be understood as doing one's duty, to perform *karma yoga* thinking of God.

## **Verses 5 – 7**

Lord Krishna said,

***Whosoever thinks of Me at the time of death attains Me on departing, there  
is no doubt about this. 8.5***

***Whatever one thinks of upon departing, he attains that state after death,  
being ever absorbed in that contemplation. 8.6***

***Therefore, at all times, remember Me and fight. With mind and intellect  
absorbed in Me, you will definitely attain Me without a doubt. 8.7***



## Part IV

# Abhyasa Yoga

Lord Krishna details how to control the mind through *abhyasa yoga*. *Abhyasa* means practising or repeating something. *Abhyasa yoga* is regularly practising the same thing over and over again. For example, *japa*. During *japa*, one must focus one's attention and repeat the name of the chosen God. This way, one controls his thoughts during the entire period of *japa*. Controlling the thoughts for the chosen time period is *abhyasa*. Two types of *abhyasa* one must perform:

- Disciplining the mind (*Mana abhyasa*)
- Disciplining the intellect (*Buddhi abhyasa*)

**Disciplining of the mind (*Mana abhyasa*):** While controlling the mind during *japa*, the mind should not think of any other thoughts. *Mana abhyasa* is the practice of controlling the mind from thinking. It is hard to keep the mind focused on anything. The mind will try to distract itself. It is a tough exercise, but by practice, one can achieve focus and calm one's mind.

**Disciplining of the intellect (*Buddhi abhyasa*):** The intellect can be disciplined by thinking about a concept or a value for as long as one can. One can choose to think about the concepts in Vedas or values or something one is learning about. Focused thinking disciplines the intellect. When one meditates on the values, it will become difficult to compromise them.

If one performs only *japa*, the intellect may become passive, and a passive intellect will not be able to discriminate between the truth and false and righteousness and unrighteousness. One must think to sharpen the intellect.

*Japa* essentially is controlling all thoughts and not thinking at all. Through *japa* one can discipline the mind. And by thinking through the concepts or values, one can discipline the intellect.

One attains the power to be able to think of what he chooses and evade all the other thoughts through these practices. This power is required even to attain material gains.

Knowledge alone cannot shape one's thoughts and behaviour. Everybody knows anger is bad, and yet we get angry. We can shape our thoughts and behaviour only through practice. The one who has his mind under control attains *Brahman*. Lord Krishna defines *Para Brahman*.

### The characteristics of *Para Brahman*

**Knower of all:** *Brahman* being the intellectual cause (*nimitta karana*) of all that is created, knows all its creation in all the three periods of time (past, present, and future), just like a potter who created the pots knows them.

**Eternal truth:** *Brahman* is the eternal truth that precedes everything. *Brahman* is the most ancient without a beginning.

**Ruler of all:** *Brahman* is the ruler, and the entire universe abides by the law of *Brahman*.

**Subtler than the subtlest:** *Brahman* is subtler than the subtlest. Therefore, *Brahman* pervades everything. The more subtle something is, the more pervasive it is. For

example, the air being subtler than water is more pervasive. *Brahman* being subtlest and without having any dimensions, is all-pervasive.

**The Nourisher of all:** *Brahman* is the sustainer of all.

**Inconceivable:** Being subtler than the subtlest, *Brahman* cannot be grasped by the mind or the sense organs. Only pure intellect can grasp *Brahman* through penance.

**Effulgent as the sun:** *Brahman* is that which illuminates everything. The '*cit*' of *Brahman* is consciousness. It is because of the consciousness a person "knows". One knows what one knows and what one doesn't because of '*cit*'. That which illuminates knowledge and ignorance is called the *Chaitanya swaroopa* (consciousness).

**Beyond all darkness:** *Brahman* is beyond ignorance. *Brahman* is transcendental and is beyond all material nature. Though *Brahman* pervades the material world yet, It is beyond it.

#### The Characteristics of Para Brahman

Knower of all

Eternal truth

Ruler of all

Subtler than the subtlest

The nourisher of all

Inconceivable

Effulgent as the sun

Beyond all darkness

Lord Krishna continues discussing the other rules the *yogi* must follow during his departure. As no one knows when one will depart, we must prepare ourselves as early as possible.

**Keep the mind stable:** The mind is stable when it is not contaminated with aversion or attraction. We must practice removing the contaminations and keeping the mind stable.

**Show devotion:** The mind goes effortlessly to what it desires. Devotion is desiring God and intending to attain Him.

**Sustain the strength of *yoga*:** Sustain the good *samskaras* (mental imprints) attained through *abhyasa yoga*. One must not slip from it at the last moment.

**Raise the life-force:** *Prana* means life-force. Regulating the life force is an essential part of well-being. In *yoga*, *pranayama* is the practice of controlling the breath. *Prana* (life-force) is used to control the mind and many other aspects of the body. For instance, slowing the breath calms the mind and the body.

Similarly, when we are angry or agitated, we breathe fast. By working on the breath, we can control the mind. The five types of life-forces called *vayus*, *vayu*, meaning wind or air is *prana*, *apana*, *vyana*, *udana* and *samana*. Each has its own functions in our body.

***Udana*:** *Udana* is the ascending *prana*, and until one is alive, it works opposite of *prana*. *Udana* is responsible for reversal activities like sneezing, vomiting, coughing, tearing, etc. *Udana* is also responsible for ejecting the subtle body out of the gross body during death. It is believed that the subtle body can leave the body through any of the nine doors (nine openings of the human body). However, this is not the best way

to leave the gross body. Lord Krishna says one must control the *udana prana* and leave the body through *sushumna nadi*.

**Nadi:** *Nadi* means channel or flow. They are subtle channels through which the life-force (*prana*) flows. *Nadis* are not physical structures within the body. They are subtle and should not be confused with nerves in our physical body. They are a network of channels through which energy travels through the body. There are several thousands of *nadis*, and they affect our well-being.

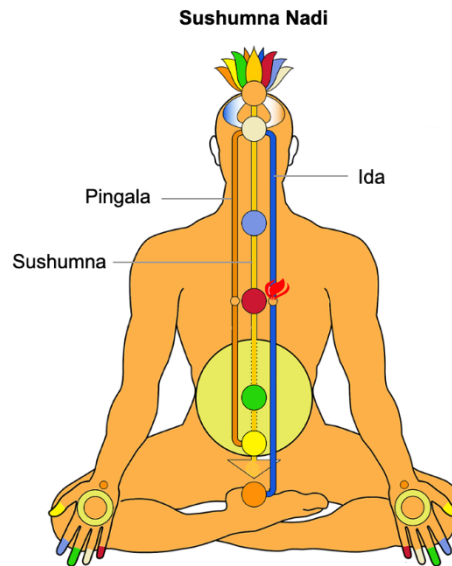
The life-force (*prana*) can circulate only when the *nadis* are not blocked. When blocked, the life-force cannot flow, negatively affecting one's physical and mental well-being. There are *yogic* practices like *pranayama*, through which the *nadis* are regulated.

Depiction of Nadis

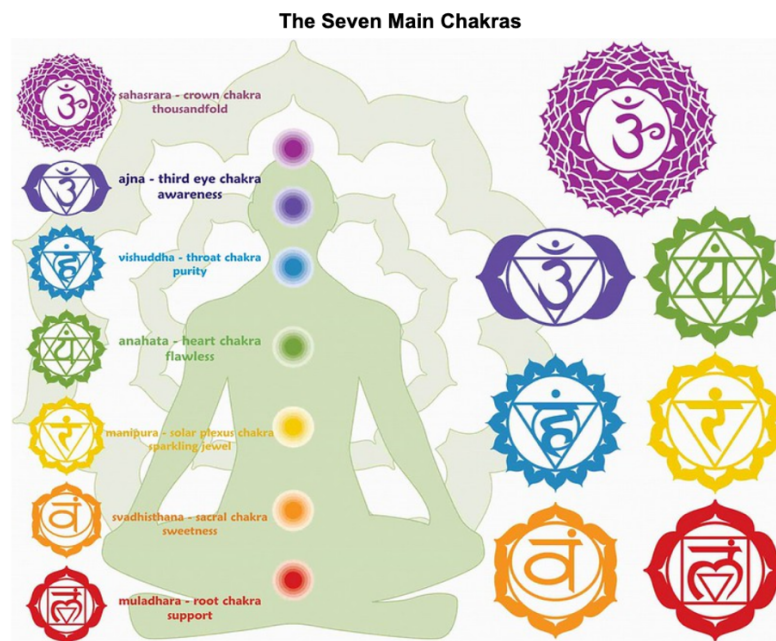


**Sushumna Nadi:** The three principal *nadis* are *sushumna*, *ida* and *pingala*. They run from the base of the spine to the head. *Ida* runs on the left of the spine, the *sushumna* in the centre runs along the spine and the *pingala* on the right of the spine. *Sushumna* connects the base *chakra* to the crown *chakra*.





**Chakras:** *Chakras* mean wheel. They are the energy centres of the body. They are spinning wheels of energy. They are also not available in the physical body and cannot be seen generally. The base *chakra* called *muladhara* is one of the seven primary *chakras* and is located at the base of the spine. The crown chakra called *sahasrara*, also one of the seven primary *chakras*, is located at the top of the head.



Lord Krishna says one must raise the life-force (*prana*) with effort through the *sushumna nadi* and hold it still and steady in between one's eyebrows during death. The raised *prana*, which is kept under control in between the eyebrows, should be taken further to the top of his head through the *sushumna nadi*.

One must have control over his *udana prana* to leave the subtle body like this, and the control of the *prana* can be attained through *yogic* practices. The path one takes after death depends on the door he leaves from. Only if the life-force leaves the gross body through *sushumna nadi* will one attain *Brahmaloka*.

**Control the sense organs:** Lord Krishna emphasized control of the senses again, so

one does not slip off during the last stage of his life.

**Calm the mind:** Calm the mind and keep the mind in the heart, for the residence of the mind is the heart. One must not let the mind roam around in the external objects. The weakened mind goes outwardly towards the objects of its attraction and aversion. One must try and keep the mind without any attachment.

**Keep the concentration stable.**



**Meditate on 'OM':** *Om* is a sacred sound and symbol in Hinduism and many other religions. There are several definitions and significance mentioned in the scriptures for *Om*. Lord Krishna defines '*Om*' here as one word which represents *Brahman*. *Om* represents both *Saguna Brahman* and *Nirguna Brahman*. Therefore, it is widely used in the scriptures. Lord Krishna says one must chant *Om* (verbally or mentally) and think of Lord Krishna (*Ishvara*) and leave the gross body.

Even if the *yogi* has not attained the knowledge of the Self but leaves the gross body this way, he attains *Brahmaloka*, and there he can attain *krama mukti*.

#### Rules to Follow During Departure

Keep the mind stable  
Show devotion  
Sustain the strength of yoga  
Raise the life-force  
Control the sense organs  
Calm the mind  
Keep the concentration stable  
Meditate on the 'OM'

Lord Krishna glorifies liberation, and He assures Arjuna that He would detail about it and says:

1. Liberation is what the goal of the Vedas is. Vedas can be broadly classified as *karma-kanda* (action and rituals section) and *jnana-kanda* (knowledge section). Although *karma-kanda* details rituals and worship that are performed to attain the material goal, performing them leads to purity of mind which is essentially a preparation for knowledge. One interested only in attaining material gain through the Vedas will eventually understand they are not permanent and move to the *jnana-kanda*. The goal of *jnana-kanda* is liberation.
2. Liberation is what the ascetics and *yogis* desire to attain.
3. Liberation is attained by those who have left behind all their attachments.
4. Liberation is why one takes up the vows of *brahmacharya*. Taking and keeping up the vows of *brahmacharya* is very hard. It is the stage of life when one is a student. They cannot get involved in any kind of indulgence during this stage. The aspirant student generally stays with the *guru* and dedicates time to learning and serving the teacher.

The rules and practices to attain liberation may seem very tough, but Lord Krishna says it is rather easy and encourages Arjuna to pursue them.

**What looks easy for one?**



1. Anything we desire looks easy to us as we are interested in it.
2. Anything we are qualified for also looks easy to us.

Lord Krishna stresses *abhyasa yoga* (practice) to attain the required qualification. He lays down three ways to perfect the practices:

1. **Undistracted mind:** One must not allow his mind to wander among sense objects. By protecting his mind, he should only be aware of the Self.
2. **Continuously:** The rule is to continue what was begun. It is a lot easier to begin something and leave it sooner or later. It is important to sustain the practices to succeed in spiritual practices.
3. **For a long period:** Most of the practices show little to no effect for a very long time. The consequences of the practices are experienced much later when the practices have become an integrated part of one's life. Sometimes we may do certain penances intermittently. Even if they are done for a long period, such things do not lead to any merit. For instance, if one meditates once a while for many years with long periods of a gap in between, there will be no result. It is important to practice and persist.

## Verses 8 – 14

Lord Krishna said,

*Engaged in the **abhyasa yoga** with an undeviating mind, he who meditates on the Supreme attains Him.* 8.8

*Whosoever is devoted and meditates upon the all-knowing, beginningless, ruler of the world, Who is subtler than the subtle, Who is the nourisher of all and inconceivable, Who is effulgent like the sun and is beyond all darkness, with the mind fully focused by the power of **yoga**, having established the breath between the eyebrows firmly, certainly attains Him.* 8.9- 8.10

*What the learned (of the Vedas) define as Imperishable; what the great ascetics and the passion free enter to attain, for which they practice the vow of celibacy, that state, I shall explain to you in brief.* 8.11

*Having closed all the gates, fixing the mind in the heart, drawing the breath to the head, and establishing firmly in **yoga**. He who departs from the body thinking of Me chanting the monosyllable **Om** — the **Brahman**, will attain the supreme goal.* 8.12- 8.13

*Whosoever thinks of Me constantly for long, I am easily attainable by that devoted **yogi**.* 8.14



## Part V

# Samsara Chakra

Lord Krishna discusses the nature of liberation and *samsara* (the cycle of death and rebirth) further. He compares them both to show the greatness of liberation, so we desire it. The Vedas impart two types of views

1. *Dosha dristi*: *Dosha* means flaws and *dristi* means vision. *Dosha dristi* means to see the flaws in everything. This vision is necessary to attain renunciation.
2. *Ishvara dristi*: *Ishvara* means God and *Ishvara dristi* means to see God in everything, which is important to attain knowledge.

Lord Krishna says that liberation is attaining Him. Attaining here means comprehending via the intellect. In reality, we do not attain *Brahman*. We are *Brahman*. Attaining in this context means understanding that we are *Brahman* through the intellect.

Lord Krishna says the body, which is due to *samsara*, is a place of sorrow. A body attains sorrows in three ways— from oneself, from nature and from circumstances. Of course, the body experiences pleasure also. Some births have more pleasure than others. And some abodes have more pleasure than others. However, neither pleasure nor pain is eternal. The nature of birth itself is transient. Our birth is essentially a place of sorrow which is also temporary.

### All the abodes are transient

Depiction of Mount Meru, on which Brahmaloka is located



The world we live in is temporary and changing. We can see and experience the transience nature of it. We know anyone born will die. We have seen several beings pass away in front of us, irrespective of what they have done or how they have lived. It is evident from our experiences.

The scripture, which mentions the other abodes, tells us that they are transient, just like our world. Not even *Brahmaloka* is eternal. Irrespective of which abode we go to when we depart, we have to return, for there is none that is eternal.

Some who follow the *karma-kanda* (the rituals) of the Vedas perform rituals to attain heaven. They regard heaven as an eternal abode where there is only pleasure. Some even think attaining heaven is liberation. However, this only shows the lack of knowledge about liberation.

All the abodes are attained only by the consequences of one's actions — through our merits and demerits, and they are all impermanent. Regardless of which abode one goes to, he must come back. This includes *Brahmaloka*, as there is no guarantee that one will certainly attain *krama mukti* there.

In this world, anything that gives us joy also gives us sorrow. They give us happiness for a short time and then eventually sorrow. Even though we may have

several such experiences, our intellect, which is flawed by nature, forgets it each time, and we experience sorrow over and over again. Renouncing such a world already is very hard. In the higher abodes, there is much more pleasure. In some higher abodes, there is only pleasure. *Brahmaloka* being the highest abode in *samsara*, makes it very hard to renounce there and attain knowledge.

Katha Upanishad says it is easy to attain the knowledge of the Self in this world. It is said that perceiving *Brahman* in one's intellect in this world is like seeing one's image in a mirror, very distinct.

*As is a mirror, so can **Brahman** be seen clearly here within one's self, as in dreams, so can **Brahman** be seen in the world of the forefathers (*pitruloka*), as in water, so can **Brahman** be seen in the world of heavenly beings (*gandharvas*); as in light and shade, so can **Brahman** be seen in the world of **Brahman** (*Brahmaloka*).*

**-Katha Upanishad 2.3.5**

The scriptures discuss various abodes. Some are higher than ours and are considered heavenly. One predominantly experiences joy in these abodes. And there are lower abodes where one predominantly experiences sorrow.

To understand the Vedas, one must have a calm mind, neither elated by joy nor agitated by sorrow. Therefore, the other abodes are not suitable for acquiring the knowledge of *Brahman*. For the same reason, one in extreme distress cannot gain any knowledge from the scripture. Just like a physically ill person cannot learn *yoga asana*, a distressed person cannot attain the knowledge of the Self.

Attaining higher abodes should not be the goal. Attaining the knowledge of Self and, thereby, liberation should be the only goal for any human being. Lord Krishna declares that only by attaining Him will there be no more births.

We are humans in this birth, and there is no certainty we will be born as humans again in the next birth. Therefore, we must make use of this birth to attain the knowledge of the Self. Lord Krishna details creation and dissolution to help us understand how one could go around for eons without attaining the goal.

### ***Samsara chakra***

*Chakra* means wheels. *Samsara chakra* also referred to as *bhavachakra* (*bhava* meaning existence), is the endless cycle of birth and death. It signifies that until one attains liberation, he will be in *samsara*. Even the biggest dissolution that destroys one's gross and subtle body cannot destroy one's *samsara*.

The creation and the dissolution are cyclic. We exist through the dissolution in our unmanifested form. There are several types of dissolutions.

**Daily dissolution (*Nitya pralaya*):** *Nitya pralaya* is the dissolution of one's day's occurrence during deep sleep. Our subtle body unmanifest into our causal body during deep sleep and manifests again when we wake up. We unmanifest and manifest again and again every day.

**Brahma:** Brahma is the first manifestation of *Brahman*. He is also known as *Prajapati*, meaning "the Lord of all beings."

### ***Kalpa pralaya:***

Just like the dissolution at the end of our day is called *nitya pralaya*, the dissolution at the end of Brahma's day is called *kalpa pralaya*. When Brahma wakes up, everything in the universe is created, and when He goes back to sleep, the world and a few other lower worlds are destroyed. This is called *kalpa pralaya*.

This is the cycle of creation and annihilation. All that is manifested during the day goes back into its unmanifest state during Brahma's sleep in His night. Our universe, along with all beings, exists in the causal body, where everyone's *karma* —

the merits and demerits are kept intact to be experienced upon manifesting again.

A *kalpa* which is Brahma's day is a very long period between creation and recreation. The scriptures have calculated this timeline. Although we must understand the unfathomable timeline as a very long period, for reference it is detailed below:

**Yugas:** There are four *yugas*, according to the scriptures. *Yuga* means eons. The four *yugas* are:

1. *Satya yuga*: Which is often referred to as the golden era. This is the first *yuga*. It is the era of truth and righteousness.
2. *Treta yuga*: This is the second era and is not as righteous as the first.
3. *Dvapara yuga*: This is the third era, and righteousness diminishes even further.
4. *Kali yuga*: The final era. It is the age of ignorance. The virtue among all diminishes. Knowledge is also diminished. This era is the end of the cycle which rebegins with *satya yuga* in the next cycle. The current *yuga* is *kali yuga*.

#### Timeline

- The *kali yuga* is said to last for 432,000 years.
- The *dvapara yuga* is said to last twice as much as *kali yuga*, i.e., *kali yuga* x 2, which is for 864,000 years.
- The *treta yuga* is said to last thrice as much as *kali yuga*, i.e., *kali yuga* x 3, which is for 1,296,000 years.
- The *satya yuga* is said to last four times as much as *kali yuga*, i.e., *kali yuga* x 4, which is for 1,728,000 years.

**Maha yuga:** One *chatur yuga* or *maha yuga* is the total of all these four *yugas*, which is 4,320,000 years. i.e. 4.32 million years

**Brahma's day:** A 1000 *chatur yuga* equals one day of Brahma and one night of Brahma is another 1000 *chatur yuga*. An entire day (and night) of Brahma is 4,320,000 \* 1000 \* 2 = 8,640,000,000 years i.e., 8.64 billion solar years

**Brahma's lifetime:** The lifetime of Brahma is 100 years, and when His life gets over, the entire universe is annihilated. A new Brahma is born, and a new universe is created — a new cycle of creation and annihilation begins. A 100 years of Brahma is 311.04 trillion solar years. The end of Brahma's lifetime is called the *maha pralaya*.

Timeline

Yugas		Years
<i>Kali yuga</i>		432000
<i>Dvapara yuga</i>	<i>Kali yuga</i> * 2	864000
<i>Treta yuga</i>	<i>Kali yuga</i> * 3	1296000
<i>Satya yuga</i>	<i>Kali yuga</i> * 4	1728000
<i>Maha yuga</i>	Sum of all yugas	4320000
<i>Brahma's day and night</i>	1000 * <i>Maha yuga</i> * 2	8.64 billion
<i>Brahma's lifetime (Maha Pralaya)</i>	100 * number of days in the years * <i>Brahma's day</i>	311.04 trillion

#### Maha pralaya

*Maha pralaya* means great dissolution, *maha* means great. During a *maha pralaya*, all 14 abodes are destroyed. All the abodes with their inhabitants, the Gods, and Brahma himself are annihilated during a *maha pralaya*. Lord Krishna says, even during the *maha pralaya*, an individual is not destroyed. All beings wait in their causal form waiting for a new creation to begin. Before this cycle, there were countless other cycles, and after this cycle, there will be countless more. There is no absolute dissolution.

Therefore, *samsara* continues for eons and eons. Even the great dissolution

does not annihilate one or free him from *samsara*. All beings take birth and die even without their control being caught up in *samsara chakra*. Liberation is the only way to free oneself from *samsara*.

The causal body stores everyone's merits and demerits. In each lifetime, all beings collect merits and demerits through their deeds with the help of their gross and subtle bodies. In the following births, the gross body and subtle body one gets is based on the *karmas* that manifest from one's merits and demerits.

Our body is the result of our merits and demerits, and it accumulates merits and demerits. This is a cycle. During dissolution, all being's merits and demerits stay in their causal body in unmanifest form. When creation occurs, they take up bodies to experience their *karma*. One cannot break out of their *karma* under any circumstances. If dissolution were the end of *samsara* there would be two flaws:

1. It will refute the *kartha bhokta* law. The law that states the doer always experiences the consequences of his actions.
2. For the next manifestation, there will be no basis by which one can get a body and circumstances.

The creation and dissolution have been going on in cycles for an infinitude time. This creation occurred after the dissolution of the last creation and the last creation from the previous, and so on. Like a tree coming out of a seed and a seed out of a tree. Like birth following death and death following birth. There is no beginning or end to them. This is the *samsara chakra*.

During dissolution, the *karmas* are not destroyed, but in liberation, they are, even if the consequences were not experienced. This exception happens only for the liberated, and the liberated are not born again because their ego "I" is destroyed after liberation. The ego is the reason for the actions that collect the merits and demerits. The wise have destroyed the ego and, therefore, the *karma*. One's *karma* can never be destroyed otherwise.

If we understand the concept of *karma* correctly, we will accept all our situations and take responsibility without blaming others or unfavourable situations. There will no longer be hate or anger for anyone. By understanding *karma*, we will lead a righteous life. If today is the reflection of our life so far, then what is tomorrow?

## Verses 15 – 19

Lord Krishna said,

*The great souls having attained Me are not born again into the transitory abode of suffering as they have reached the highest perfection.* 8.15

*The dwellers of all the worlds, including the highest abode of Brahma, are subject to return. But for those who reach Me, there is no rebirth.* 8.16

*Those who know that one day of Brahma lasts a thousand *chatur yuga*, and so does his night are the wise who know day and night.* 8.17

*At the beginning of Brahma's day, all living beings become manifest from the unmanifest state, and at the arrival of Brahma's night, they merge into their unmanifest source again.* 8.18

*The same multitude of beings take birth again and again during Brahma's day and are reabsorbed during His night to manifest again helplessly during His next day.* 8.19





## Part VI

# The Unmanifest

Lord Krishna details more about liberation, explaining the three states of existence. The three states He talks about are, the manifest, the unmanifest, and the Unmanifest.

## The manifest

The world is an object for our senses. It can be experienced through the senses. That which we can say exists, for instance, our mind, even though it cannot be seen, is a manifestation. The gross or subtle existence of anything is called a manifestation. The gross and subtle world has come out of its causal existence.

## The unmanifest

The reason for any manifestation is the unmanifest called *maya* (cosmic delusion). *Maya* is not an object and cannot be perceived by our senses. During dissolution, all the manifests go back into *maya* and exist in their unmanifest state without being available for the senses to experience until the next manifestation.

## The Unmanifest

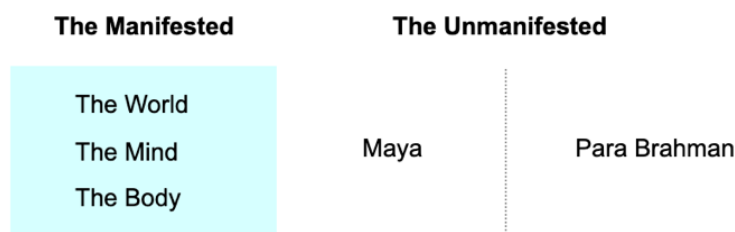
Apart from *maya* there is another different Unmanifest attaining which one attains liberation. This Unmanifest is called the *Para Brahman*. *Para Brahman* cannot be grasped by the senses. It is the Cosmic force behind the sense organs because of which we perceive.

This indestructible Unmanifest is the unchanging truth. Everyone must aim to attain it. During dissolution, everything goes into *maya*. Attaining *maya* is not liberation. Attaining *Para Brahman* is.

Those who attain the Superior Unmanifest do not fall back into *samsara* again. When a *samsari* dies, his gross body perishes here (goes back to the five primordial elements). Based on his *karma*, his subtle body goes to different abodes and eventually takes up new bodies.

For the liberated, both his bodies perish when he dies. His subtle body mixes up with the subtle primordial elements. His causal body mixes up with *maya*, and he becomes *Brahman* and will not be born again.

Lord Krishna, having told what one must attain, gives another important path to attain liberation, which is devotion.



## Devotion

There are three types of devotion:

1. **The worldly's devotion:** This devotion is in which the devotee, the goal, and

the object of devotion are three different things. This is the most common devotion we see; many show their devotion towards God to attain their material pursuits or free themselves from distress.

2. **The devotion of one yearning for liberation:** This devotion is in which the devotee is different, but the goal and the object of devotion are the same. For some, the goal is to attain God, and he shows devotion to attain Him. The aim is to attain God through God, but the devotee sees himself as one apart from God.
3. **The wise's devotion:** This devotion is in which the devotee, goal, and object of devotion are all the same and undivided. This is the devotion of the wise who knows *Brahman* and is superior to all devotions. The ego, which splits oneself from others and God, is removed, and the devotion is non-dual. Out of knowledge, when one understands that the devotion to the Self is the same as the devotion towards God, he has achieved the last and the highest state of devotion. The devotion without discrimination between the devotee and the object of devotion is the complete single-pointed devotion, and only through this devotion can one attain *Ishvara*. Other kinds of devotion only qualify one for this undivided devotion. Through the other devotion, one will attain only *Saguna Brahman* — the *Brahman* with *maya*. The all-pervasive *Para Brahman* can be attained only with the highest form of devotion.

The Types of Devotion		
	Same	Different
The worldly's devotion		The devotee The goal The object of devotion
The one yearning for liberation	The goal The object of devotion	The devotee
The wise's devotion	The devotee The goal The object of devotion	

## Verses 20 – 22

Lord Krishna said,

*Superior to this unmanifest, there is another Unmanifest that does not perish when all beings perish.* 8.20

*The imperishable Unmanifest is the ultimate goal to attain, attaining which one does not return to this world. That is My Supreme abode.* 8.21

*That Supreme *Purusha*, within whom all beings exist and by whom the entire universe is pervaded, is known only through undivided devotion.* 8.22





## Part VII

# The Path

Lord Krishna describes the path a *karmi* (the one on the righteous path of action) and the path a *yogi* (one engaged in meditation) takes after death.

### What travels after death?

Death is discussed as a departure and a journey afterwards, but what departs? To understand this, we must understand the definition of life. What is a being? A being is defined as one with all the three attributes mentioned below:

1. The Soul: The *Atman*, the imperishable, eternal individual Soul.
2. The causal and the subtle body: The five subtle and gross primordial elements are *jada* (lifeless). The mind, which is made of these subtle elements, is also lifeless. The subtle primordial elements, however, have the ability to reflect the awareness of the Soul. This is *chidabasa*. The gross body does not have this ability.
3. The awareness (*chidabasa*): The Soul illuminates the subtle body.

Many think living means having the Soul in the body and that death is Soul leaving the body; this is not correct. The individual Soul is the all-pervading *Brahman*; It is all-pervasive and does not leave anything. It is the witness of all beings. The Soul does not travel after one's death.

When we say something has life, it means it has a subtle body and the reflection of the Soul. Death is the subtle body leaving the gross body. The subtle body is *jada* (lifeless) and does not have any awareness of its own; it will not travel on its own. Therefore, awareness in the subtle body takes up the journey with the subtle body (mind). The mind and the awareness (because of *chidabasa*) take on the journey ahead after death.

They travel to different abodes to experience their merits and demerits. However, they need a gross body to experience the merits and demerits. For this reason, they take up different bodies based on their *karma*.

### The path of a *yogi*

*Yogi* here refers to those who are engaged in meditation but have not attained the knowledge of the Self. They may have done a lot of spiritual practices but have not attained the knowledge of the Self here in this world. Lord Krishna says they travel through the path called *shukla gati*, which is the path of light. *Shukla* means light, and *gati* means path.

He says the *yogis* are led on this path through the demigods to *Brahmaloka*. According to the Upanishads, when one dies, he is led by the demigods to one of the abodes. Lord Krishna says the five demigods who lead the *yogi* to *Brahmaloka* are the Gods who govern the five forces:

1. The fire.
2. The light.
3. The day.
4. The bright fortnight of the moon.
5. The six months of the northern solstice.

He refers to the *Brahmaloka* as the path from which one does not return, as there is a chance for the *yogi* to attain *krama mukti* in due course of time. This should not be

understood as the *jivanmukti* (liberated while alive), as those who are liberated do not have a path to go or return from.

### The path of a *karmi*

A *karmi* is one who has lived righteously throughout his life. He has been in action all his life and has little or no experience in any spiritual practices like meditation, and has never attempted to attain the knowledge of the Self.

When he leaves the body, he travels through the path called *krsna gati*, which means the dark path. *Krsna* means dark, *gati* means path.

Lord Krishna says this path leads to *svargaloka*. *Svargaloka* is one of the higher abodes. It is a heavenly abode where the righteous live in paradise. It is an abode where beings live until they are next incarnated based on their *karma*. The ones who go to this abode must return to the *samsara chakra*. This is referred to as the abode of return.

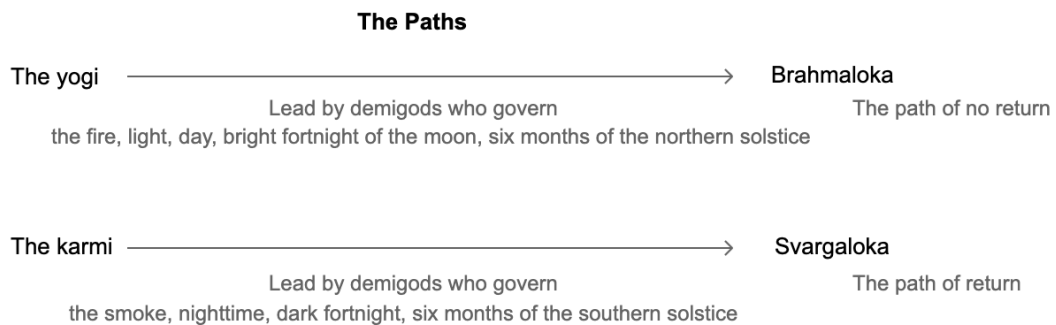
The path to *svargaloka* — the abode which is said to be lit by the lunar light is through the four demigods who govern

1. The smoke
2. The nighttime
3. The dark fortnight
4. The six months of the southern solstice

These two paths are eternal, like *samsara*. They are without a beginning and an end. The paths will always exist as there will always be beings in the cycle of evolution.

All beings evolve through the path of action only. After many incarnations, they will eventually come to the path of knowledge and liberate themselves from the *samsara chakra*. Even the ones on the path of unrighteousness will evolve eventually. Therefore, the *samsara chakra* keeps going without a beginning and an end.

Lord Krishna says the one who knows about the two paths is not deluded. The *yogi* who knows about the two paths, that one leads to *samsara* and the other to liberation, will not be deluded.



## Verses 23 – 27

Lord Krishna said,

*Now I will tell you about the path in which the *yogis* depart never to return and the path in which they depart to return.* 8.23

*Attaining *Brahman* through the path of the fire, light, daytime, the bright fortnight, and the six months of the northern solstice, the men who know *Brahman* do not return.* 8.24

*Attaining to the lunar light through the path of smoke, nighttime, the dark fortnight, and the six months of the southern solstice, the *karmis* return to be born again.* 8.25

*These two paths are eternal, the path of light leads to no return, and the path of darkness leads to return. 8.26*

*The **yogis** who know these two paths are not deluded. Therefore, at all times, be steadfast in **yoga**. 8.27*

Lord Krishna ends this chapter by talking about the glory of **yoga**. Controlling the mind and channelizing thoughts is very difficult. The mind is subtler, so it is a lot harder than controlling the actions of the body. The **yogi** who streamlines his mind and meditates attains meritorious results beyond what is promised for actions in the scriptures.

There are several actions prescribed in the scriptures by performing which one attains merits. These are, for instance, performing the Vedic sacrifices, the study of the Vedas, practising austerities, and charities.

Greater than all these merits are attained by the **yogi** who rightly understands the teaching imparted by the Lord in his answers to the seven questions and who meditates. His reward is that he attains **Brahman**.

## Verse 28

Lord Krishna said,

*The **yogis**, who understand this teaching, attain merits beyond the fruits attained by performing Vedic rituals, studying the Vedas, practising austerities, and charities. They attain **Brahman**. 8.28*



**Aum Tat Sat**

# Summary

## Part I — Introduction

- *Krama* means step by step. *Mukti* means liberation. *Krama mukti* means liberation in steps or progressive liberation.
- *Krama mukti* is liberation in *Brahmaloka*
- *Krama mukti* is an option for one who has come to the path of knowledge of the Self but was unable to succeed in it in his lifetime.

## Part II — Arjuna's Question

- *Brahman*: The wise understand *Brahman* as the indestructible Supreme.
- *Adhyatma*: *Adhyatma* is the individual Soul
- *Karma*: *Karma* is the sacrifices made which causes the origin of all being.
- *Adhibhuta*: The five primordial elements called the *pancha bhoota* - space, air, fire, water, and earth — are called *adhibhuta*.
- *Adhidaivata*: *Adhidaivata* is that which precedes all Gods and deities. It is the Supreme deity, the active principle in the creation of material objects.
- *Adhiyajna*: Lord Krishna says He is the witness inside everybody who gives them the merits or demerits accordingly. He is the one who bestows rewards for everyone's actions.
- *Prayana kala smarana*: Lord Krishna teaches how to depart this world. He says the last thoughts of the dying person determine his next birth and that one's most prominent thought occupies the mind during the time of death.

## Part III — The Nature of the Mind

- If one's consciousness is absorbed in God at the moment of death, he attains God.
- The way the mind works in steps are 1) Practices (*abhyasa*) 2) Mental imprints (*samskaras*) 3) Effortless thinking.
- The two conditions to remember God during the last days of one's life are: One has to think of God his entire life. One should think of Him as a goal and not as a means to attain other goals. One must think of God without other desires.

## Part IV — *Abhyasa Yoga*

- Two types of *abhyasa* one must perform: Disciplining the mind (*Mana abhyasa*), and disciplining the intellect (*Buddhi abhyasa*).
- *Abhyasa* means practising or repeating something. *Abhyasa yoga* is regularly practising the same thing over and over again. For example, *japa*. During *japa*, one must focus his attention and repeat the name of the chosen God.
- The intellect can be disciplined by thinking about a concept or a value as much as one can.
- Characteristics of *Para Brahman*: Knower of all, Eternal truth, Ruler of all, Subtler than the subtlest, the Nourisher of all, Inconceivable, Effulgent as the sun, Beyond all darkness.
- Rules for departure: One must keep the mind stable, show devotion, sustain the strength of *yoga*, raise the life-force, control the sense organs, keep the mind without any attachment, keep the concentration stable, and meditate on '*OM*'.
- Lord Krishna says liberation is what the goal of the Vedas is, it is what the ascetics and the *yogis* desire to attain, it is attained by those who have left behind all the attachment, liberation is why one takes up the vows of *brahmacharya*.
- Lord Krishna stresses *abhyasa yoga* (practice) to attain the required qualifications. He lays down three ways to perfect the practices: undistracted mind, continuous practice, and practice for a long period.

### Part V — *Samsara Chakra*

- All the abodes are transient. Irrespective of which abode we go to when we depart, we must return, for there is none that is eternal.
- *Brahmaloka* being the highest abode of all in *samsara*, makes it very hard to renounce there and attain knowledge.
- Until one attains liberation, he will be in *samsara*. Even the biggest of dissolution that destroys one's gross and subtle body does not destroy one's *samsara*.
- The cycles of creation and dissolution have been going on in cycles for an infinitude time.
- During dissolution, the *karmas* are not destroyed, but only in liberation they are. This is an exception that happens only for the liberated, and the liberated is not born again.

### Part VI — The Unmanifest

- Lord Krishna details the manifest, the unmanifest, and the Unmanifest.
- The manifest: The gross or subtle existence of anything is called a manifestation
- The unmanifest: The reason for any manifestation is the unmanifest, called *maya* (cosmic delusion).
- The Unmanifest: Apart from *maya* there is another different Unmanifest attaining which one attains liberation. This Unmanifest is called the *Para Brahman*. *Para Brahman* cannot be grasped by the senses. It is the Cosmic force behind the senses organs because of which we perceive
- There are three types of devotion: Devotion in which the devotee, the goal, and the object of devotion are three different things.
- The devotion in which the devotee is different, but the goal and the object of devotion are the same.
- The devotion in which the devotee, goal, and the object of devotion are all the same – undivided.

### Part VII — The Path

- Lord Krishna describes the path of a *karmi* and the path of a *yogi* after death.
- After death, the *yogi* travels through the path of light to *Brahmaloka*. The *karmi* travel through the dark path to *svargaloka*.
- Lord Krishna says the one who knows about the two paths is not deluded.
- Lord Krishna concludes the chapter by saying greater than all these merits are attained by the *yogi* who rightly understands the teaching imparted by the Lord in his answers to the seven questions and who meditates. He attains *Brahman* as the reward.

## Chapter 9

# Raga Vidhya Raja Guhya yoga



and *karma* when a new eon begins.

This chapter is called the Royal Knowledge and Royal Secret, as Lord Krishna imparts the Royal knowledge and reveals a Royal secret to Arjuna. He says He pervades everything in an unmanifest form yet is not limited by them. He compares the wise to the ignorant and talks about their goals and devotion and says the wise, with the Supreme knowledge, seek the Self, while the ignorant disregarding the Self, seek to fulfil lower desires. Therefore, the ignorant go through endless cycles of birth and death. He says He dissolves everything at the end of the eon, and everyone is born again out of their own nature





## Part I

# The Royal Knowledge

Lord Krishna begins this chapter by telling Arjuna that He would reveal a hidden treasure of a secret which is both knowable and experienceable. Through such revelation, one attains direct liberation. *Brahma jnana* — the knowledge of *Brahman* — the Supreme knowledge, however, must be passed on only to the qualified. The knowledge becomes wisdom for the qualified and remains a secret even when revealed to the unqualified. The three kinds of knowledge often talked about in the scriptures are:

1. Empirical knowledge (*pratyaksha jnana*)
2. Indirect knowledge (*paroksha jnana*)
3. Intuitive knowledge (*aparoksha jnana*)

**Empirical knowledge (*pratyaksha jnana*):** *Pratyaksha* means that which the eye can perceive. It is the knowledge attained through direct perception. *Pratyaksha jnana* is the knowledge attained by experiencing an object through the senses. For example, one can see a tree and thereby know the tree.

**Indirect knowledge (*paroksha jnana*):** *Para* means beyond, and *aksha* means eye, and *paroksha* means beyond the eye. Indirect knowledge is the knowledge obtained via someone, though not directly perceived by one. For example, one may not have seen a tree at all but may have learnt about it through someone else.

**Intuitive knowledge (*aparoksha jnana*):** *Aparoksha* means not invisible. Intuitive knowledge is the highest kind of knowledge which is directly experienced without the involvement of the mind or the senses.

Indirect knowledge is knowing *Brahman* exists. Intuitive knowledge is realizing "I am *Brahman*."

Lord Krishna says the knowledge of *Brahman* is both indirect and intuitive. The knowledge of *Brahman* will begin as indirect knowledge and will become intuitive in the end as *Brahman* is the object "I" and is not apart from one.

Lord Krishna says He would impart Arjuna the most Superior knowledge as he is devoid of evil. In this context, evil mainly refers to jealousy. Jealousy in people provokes them to use another's flaws as a way of belittling them. Discussing another's weakness is one's own character flaw, and with such flaws, the mind cannot absorb the Supreme knowledge. It is the function of the intellect to judge others and circumstances. A well-functioning intellect will show the danger and flaws in everything, which is essential. Even to attain renunciation, one must see the flaws in the sense objects. It is necessary to know others' flaws for one's protection; however, abusing them shows a lack of strength in one's character. Without the right values, one cannot attain knowledge. Lord Krishna defines this Supreme knowledge of *Brahman* as the following:

1. **Royal knowledge:** Everything in this empirical world is subject to change, and our knowledge based on the objects or people changes when the object of knowledge changes. The knowledge of *Brahman*, which is based on the eternal truth, is the king of all knowledge as the subject of the knowledge — *Brahman* is the unchangeable truth. For this reason, no other knowledge attained is Absolute. The knowledge of *Brahman* is the highest form of knowledge one can attain.
2. **Royal secret:** In general, when a secret is revealed, it is no more a secret. But Vedanta, even when revealed, remains a secret for the unqualified. Therefore, there is a great emphasis on attaining the qualifications for knowledge along with attaining the knowledge of the scriptures.
3. **Highest purifier:** Several sacrifices and *yogas* are mentioned in the Vedas to purify oneself. When performed, they add merits and remove certain demerits for the performer. According to the scriptures, even the merits are impurities because they lead to rebirth but just in more comfortable circumstances. Only liberation, attained through knowledge, removes all *karmas*, destroys the merits and the demerits, and purifies one eternally, so he does not have to take birth again.
4. **Directly perceivable:** One cannot perceive one's merits, demerits or the fruits attained through any sacrifices. However, the fruits of attaining knowledge are empirical (*pratyaksha*). The calm and contentment in mind can be perceived through the senses. Just like eating removes hunger immediately and we know that we have experienced the result of our action, so is bliss and contentment experiential on attaining *Brahman*. *Brahman*, Itself is not experiential by our senses, but the fruits of attaining the knowledge of *Brahman* are. *Jivanmukti* (attaining liberation while alive) is experiential.
5. **The path is righteous:** Though *Brahman* is beyond righteous and unrighteous, the path to liberation is only through righteousness.
6. **Easy to attain:** One must strive to attain anything. The more we strive, the more we attain. However, the knowledge that gives us the highest bliss is not the toughest to attain. Several other penances are even tougher to attain, like the *siddhis* (some special abilities or supernatural powers). The knowledge of *Brahman*, in comparison, yields the highest attainable and yet easier than many other penances.
7. **Indestructible:** The knowledge, once attained, will not be depleted, nor will it perish. It is eternal and the highest of all goals.

**The Knowledge of Brahman  
is Defined as**

The Royal knowledge  
The Royal secret  
Highest purifier  
Directly perceivable  
The path is righteous  
Easy to attain  
Indestructible

Having talked about the greatness of knowledge, Lord Krishna emphasizes the importance of faith in the process of attaining it. Faith (*sraddha*) is an attitude one must have before attaining knowledge. It is through faith one can get to knowledge. Until one knows the Self, faith is necessary. Once the Self is known, it becomes apparent to him; faith is no longer required and is replaced with wisdom. Three things one must have full faith on:

1. **The knowledge:** One must have faith in the knowledge which is non-dualistic in nature (*advaita*).
2. **The instruments to attain knowledge:** One must have full faith in the scriptures and the *guru* (teacher) as they are the instruments through which one attains knowledge.
3. **The result of knowledge:** One must have faith that he will be able to break free from *samsara* (the cycle of death and rebirth) as the direct result of the knowledge and pursue learning.

**To Attain Knowledge Faith is Required on**

The Knowledge (Advaita)	The Instruments (Guru and Scriptures)	The Result (Liberation)
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Lord Krishna says without faith, one will not even attempt to attain knowledge. He will, for sure, stay in *samsara*, encountering losses, and death, without ever entering the path to attain union with Him.

## Verses 1 – 3

Lord Krishna said,

*I shall reveal to you — who are not envious, the greatest mystery of knowledge and wisdom, upon knowing which you will be liberated from the miseries. 9.1*

***It is the royal knowledge, the royal secret, the highest purifier. It is directly realizable and is in accordance with **dharmā**. It is easy to attain, and it is Indestructible. 9.2***

***Those without faith in the knowledge of the Self, return to this path of loss and death without attaining Me. 9.3***

Lord Krishna elucidates the royal knowledge and the royal secret which He glorified.



## Part II

# The Sovereign Wisdom

Lord Krishna reveals the royal knowledge to clarify *Ishvara* (God) and His relationship with the created world. The knowledge is a mystery because not many understand, even when revealed. Lord Krishna says the relationship between Him (as *Brahman*) and the world is — *satya mithya sambhanda* which means the truth-delusion relationship.

### The truth-delusion relationship

From the rope and the snake's story, we know the rope is real, and the snake seen on the rope is a delusion. There is a real object and an object that is projected on it. The relationship between these two is an example of a truth-delusion relationship.

According to the *advaita* (non-dualism) doctrines, the world is a projection on *Brahman*. The world that is projected on *Brahman* is a delusion (*mithya*), and *Brahman* is the truth (*satya*). *Brahman* is the rope, and the world is the snake. Lord Krishna describes this relationship in three statements, which are easier to understand with examples.

### The clay-pot relationship

The pots that are made of clay are only the change in the form of the clay. The change in the form of clay is given a name — pot. There is nothing new created, only the form is changed, and a name is given. According to the scriptures, anything created only out of words is not a creation. Therefore, only the clay is real, and the pots are not.

The clay is the reason, and the pots are the cause. The unchanging reason is the truth, and the cause is a delusion. However, this is not always the case. For example, milk, which is the reason for the butter, changes to become butter. The reason here changes to cause; it is not an unchanging reason. But the rope and the clay are the unchanging truth upon which the form is projected (or created). This relationship is called the truth-delusion relationship. To elucidate this point, (let's assume) the clays say:

1. All pots are in me
2. I am not in the pots
3. The pots are not in Me

**All pots are in me:** By this statement, the clay acknowledges that the pots are made of clay and that the clay exists, and the pots exist.

**I am not in the pots:** The clay says the pots are made of clay and that the clay is not dependent on the pots, but the pots are dependent on the clay for their existence. The clay having an independent existence is real, and the pots dependent on the clay are a delusion. Anything that does not have an independent existence is not real. Though it may appear to be there, it is not real if it is dependent. For example, a shadow dependent on another object is not. Anything that exists independently is real, and anything dependent on another for its existence is not.

**The pots are not in me:** This statement directly contradicts the first statement, which says, all pots are in me. The pots that are not real do not exist. The pots are a delusion.

Therefore, the clay claims the pot does not exist to exist in me.

According to the first statement, the clay and the pots exist. According to the second statement, the clay exists independently, and the pots depend on the clay, so the clay is real, and the pots are not. According to the third statement, the clay exists, and the pots do not. Though the first and the third statements contradict each other, it was necessary to convey the relationship between them this way. Because the non-real nature of the pots cannot be accepted if they were claimed to be delusional in the beginning without attempting to explain why. We must understand the difference between truth, delusion and false.

### **The truth, false and the delusion — *Sat, Asat, Mithya***

*Sat* means the truth. That which exists. *Asat* is the opposite of *sat*, which means untrue. That which does not exist. The snake seen on the rope, however, is neither *sat* nor *asat*. It is *mithya*. *Mithya* can be defined as delusion. It is that which exists in one's experience alone. It is not real, but it is also not unreal. When one experiences it, it seems real. Because of our ignorance, we think that everything we experience exists and that which we don't, does not exist. According to the Upanishads, the world is *mithya*, an ever-changing illusion.

### **How can one differentiate between *sat*, *asat* and *mithya*?**

The truth (*sat*) is:

1. That which exists in all the three divisions of time — the past, the present, and the future.
2. That which exists independently.

Delusion (*asat*, *mithya*) is:

1. That which exists in the present only.
2. That which cannot exist independently. E.g. a shadow.
3. Delusion (*mithya*) can be removed by knowledge.

#### **Difference between the Truth and Delusion**

<b>The Truth (Sat)</b>	<b>Delusion (Asat, Mithya)</b>
Exists in the past, the present, and the future.	Exists only in the present
Exists independently.	Cannot exist independently.

The pots, however, having existed, are not claimed untrue (*asat*). They are experiential, like a shadow, though not real. This phenomenon is illustrated with yet another example to attain a thorough understanding. The waves exist in the ocean. The waves are just a change in the form of the ocean with a name. They are nothing new or apart from the ocean itself, yet they have another name. The waves are dependent on the ocean for their existence. The ocean does not depend on the waves for their existence. The ocean is the independent truth. The waves are the dependent delusion. Therefore, the waves do not have real existence; they are temporary forms of the ocean.

### **The unmanifested *Brahman* is the reason for the world.**

The manifestation of the entire world is because of the unmanifested *Brahman*, just like the reason for the manifestation of the snake is the unmanifested rope. For if the rope manifests itself, there would be no snake. The rope, without any change, is the underlying principle of the manifested snake. Similarly, the unmanifested *Brahman*



without any change is the underlying principle of the world. There is only *Brahman*, and the rest are just Its forms. Lord Krishna explains *Brahman's* relationship with the world in three statements:

1. All beings exist in Me.
2. I do not exist in them.
3. The beings do not exist in Me.

**Krishna explains Brahman's relationship with the world in the three statements**

All beings exist in Me.

I do not exist in them.

The beings do not exist in Me.

## Verses 4 – 5

Lord Krishna said,

*This entire universe is pervaded by Me in My unmanifest form, all beings exist in Me, but I do not exist in them. 9.4*

*And yet, the beings do not exist in Me; behold this as My Divine mystery. Although I create and sustain them all, I do not dwell in them. 9.5*

### *Brahman* is unassociated

*Brahman* does not have any association with anything. Associations happen only when there are two or more objects. The existence of more than one object leads to a relationship of some kind with the other. Even if the objects are far apart, one can have a relationship with an object through thoughts. However, if there is only one without a second, there cannot be any association or relationship. *Brahman* is all there is. Under two conditions, there will not be any relationship between two objects, even if they are in close vicinity to one another. The two conditions are:

1. **One object has a form or has manifested, and another does not have a form or is in an unmanifest state:** An example would be space that does not have a form even though it pervades everything, including air, water, and land. Space is not affected by these. *Brahman* is unmanifest and formless. Therefore, It cannot be affected by the manifested world.
2. **One object is the truth, and the other a delusion:** Water mirage cannot wet the sand beneath it. The sand is real, and the mirage is a delusion. Therefore, they both can exist together without having any relationship with each other.

The entire universe is like a water mirage. All manifested are just forms projected on *Brahman*. *Brahman* is not affected by it, nor does the *Brahman* have any relationship with the manifested. Those who truly understand this become unattached to all that is

manifested, knowing they are only a delusion (*mithya*).

**Conditions under which there will be no relationship between two objects**

One object has a form or has manifested, and another does not have a form or is in an unmanifest state.

One object is the truth and the other a delusion.

## Creation and dissolution

The two states of being are the manifested state and the unmanifest state. God (*Ishvara*) manifests the world through *maya*, keeping *maya* under His control, completely unaffected by it. All beings are manifested from *maya* are born deluded helplessly because of their *karma*. *Ishvara's* lower nature, *maya*, projects out all forms during creation. *Maya*, which is dependent on *Ishvara*, is *mithya* (delusion). *Maya* is also *jada* (lifeless), and so is the world and all beings manifested out of it. *Ishvara's* higher nature, the consciousness — '*cit*', endows the manifested world with life.

The creation and dissolution process is a beginningless process that happens in cycles spread over a period of eons. During dissolution, the manifested universe's names and forms go back into *maya* and remain there until the next manifestation. The *karmas* of all beings lie dormant in *maya* to be realized again through the next manifestation.

*Ishvara*, though responsible for the creation of the universe, is not bound by His actions. Having no desire or motive for the creation and being unconcerned about the results of His actions, His actions do not yield fruits.

The beings are born based on their *karma*. Their birth, their forms, and their experiences are all from their *karma*. God creates the world without any attraction or aversion to all beings. His action will, therefore, not bind him. Like the sun, without performing any action, is the cause of the creation and sustenance of all beings just by its presence, so is the entire universe created and sustained by the presence of *Ishvara* through His power of *maya*.

## Verses 6 – 10

Lord Krishna said,

*Know that, like the mighty wind moving everywhere, always rests in space; all living beings always rest in Me.* 9.6

*At the end of the cycle, all beings go into My primordial material nature. At the beginning of the next cycle, I manifest them again.* 9.7

*Presiding over My material nature, I send forth the whole multitude of beings again and again, helplessly under the control of their nature.* 9.8

*None of these actions binds Me, for I remain ever detached from these actions like the one unconcerned.* 9.9

***Ordained by Me, the material nature brings into being all moving and unmoving forms. Because of this, the world revolves.*** 9.10



### Part III

## The Ignorant

Lord Krishna says many disregard Him when He takes up a human form as they do not have the right understanding of His higher nature, which is the all-pervading unmanifest nature. The ignorant also do not accept God in all or other forms or names. The Lord manifests from time to time to protect righteousness and the Supreme knowledge. Lord Krishna says the ignorant's desires are so low that even if they are fulfilled, they do not benefit anyone. Their actions, which are based on their lowly desires, do not yield good outcomes either. Even if they engage in Vedic sacrifices, they will not attain the desired results as they do not perform them correctly. They only accumulate unnecessary and futile knowledge. They will not have knowledge or discrimination about the truth and the untruth. Their innate nature is demonic, either full of *rajas guna* (passion) or full of *tamas guna* (dullness). They are far from *sattva guna* and do not even aim to attain *sattva guna*. Because of their nature, they are deluded.

## Verses 11 – 12

Lord Krishna said,

*The ignorant disregard Me when I assume a human form without knowing My higher nature, the Lord of all beings. 9.11*

*These ignorant people have vain hopes, actions, and knowledge. They partake only of the delusive nature of the demons. 9.12*

Having talked about the ignorant, Lord Krishna describes the devotees and how they seek Him.



## Part IV

# Devotion

Contrary to the ignorant, those who have attained the correct knowledge of God possess a pure mind and are in *sattva guna* (the quality of awareness). They follow Him with an undivided mind. Because of their knowledge, they know the imperishable nature of God and aim to attain Him. Lord Krishna explains how they seek Him:

1. **With effort:** One cannot seek God without keeping up good values. And it is a great effort to be on the path of righteousness. To be devoted, one must be non-violent (in thoughts, speech, and action) and control his mind and senses.
1. **Strong vows:** This path is arduous. Keeping control of one's values requires a lot of effort and patience. It is also not easy to change one's nature as one's nature is made of one's thoughts and actions which are difficult to change. This path is full of constant failures, so one must strive through it without slipping away.
2. **Always glorifying Me:** One who knows the true nature of God will always be contemplating and glorifying the greatness of God.
3. **Surrender unto Me:** A true devotee surrenders to God with detachment, without ego, and accepts everything as God's grace out of devotion.
4. **With a fixed mind:** One must worship God with the mind solely on Him without being affected by any other objects. The mind and the senses should be fixed on Him; that is undivided devotion.

There are several ways the devotees worship based on their nature and their knowledge. It is a misconception to think devotion is different from knowledge. We develop attachment or aversion towards others only based on our understanding of them. The love or hatred we have for another person is by knowing the person. Similarly, devotion and knowledge go hand in hand. By performing the sacrifice (*yajna*) of knowledge, some attain the knowledge of God. The devotion one has, is the measure of one's knowledge. Lord Krishna mentions three stages of devotion by which His devotees with different levels of knowledge seek Him.

1. **Dualistic devotion:** Many view themselves as separate from God. They may have profound emotion and devotion to the form and name of the God they are brought up worshipping. They understand God as the creator and all beings, including themselves, as His creation. This is a dualistic devotion.
2. **One all-pervading God:** With knowledge, some know that there is only one all-pervading God. They have realized that God is only one, undivided irrespective of the names and forms they worship.
3. **Non-dualistic devotion:** With the right knowledge, one moves from saying there is only one God to saying there is only God. They realize that everything is God, including themselves. This is the non-dualistic devotion that comes from fully understanding *Brahman*.

## Verses 13 – 19

Lord Krishna said,

*But the great souls with divine nature take refuge in Me; they worship Me with an undistracted mind knowing Me as the imperishable source of all beings.* 9.13

*Always chanting My glories, firm in vows, bowing to Me, and worshipping Me with loving devotion.* 9.14

*Others engage in the sacrifice of knowledge and worship Me in oneness, some others see Me separate from themselves, and yet others worship Me in all manifestations of My forms.* 9.15

To emphasise everything is one — is the all-pervading [Brahman](#), Lord Krishna said,

*I am the Vedic ritual — the sacrifice. I am the oblation (food) to the ancestors. I am the medicinal herb, and I am the Vedic chant. I am the ghee, the fire, and the act of offering.* 9.16

Lord Krishna uses an example of a fire sacrifice and describes all components are [Brahman](#).

*I am the Father of this universe, the Mother, the Sustainer, the Grandfather. I am the Knowable, the Purifier, the sacred syllable [OM](#) and also the Rig, Sama, and the Yajur Vedas.* 9.17

*I am the Supreme Goal, the Sustainer, the Master, the Witness, the Abode, the Shelter, and the Friend. I am the Origin, the Sustenance, and the End. I am the Reservoir and the eternal Seed.* 9.18

*Like the sun, I radiate heat, I hold back and send forth the rain, I am immortality and death, I am manifest and the unmanifest.* 9.19

Lord Krishna discusses the devotees who worship Him with the desire to gain material well-being through devotion.

The devotees with desires, irrespective of how much they desire or ask for, are within [samsara](#). For these devotees, the results of their worship will still yield sorrow. Even if they attain what they want, they cannot free themselves from suffering. They seek lower pleasure instead of higher because they don't know the higher.

Lord Krishna shows the contrasting path of the devotees — the one with material desires and the one without any material desires. Lord Krishna says the devotee with desires worship Him to attain heaven ([svargaloka](#)), through various rituals mentioned in the Vedas in the [karma kanda](#) (action and rituals section). They regard heaven as their highest goal and aim for it without knowing they have to return after a short period of enjoyment. Performing the rituals mentioned in the Vedas, one attains merits for his deeds. The rituals like sacrifices ([yajna](#)) mentioned in the Vedas involve a lot of charity. It is the charity in them that brings one the merits. The merits help one remove all the hindrances from the path to the higher abode.

These devotees worship the Lord through different demigods and attain their wishes. With their wish granted, they go to heaven and enjoy until their merits are exhausted. Once the merits are over, they will have to return to this world. The higher abode is a place of joy, and the heaven ([svargaloka](#)) is a vast abode where one attains all sense pleasures in abundance. But it is temporary as the other abodes and will have



to return. However, many think the heaven as the final abode from which there is no return and some others even think of it as liberation, which is not correct. Those who have not moved further from *karma kanda* (action and rituals section) to the *jnana kanda* section (knowledge section) of the Vedas do not have the correct knowledge.

## Verses 20 – 21

Lord Krishna said,

*The men of the three Vedas, the drinkers of soma, worship Me through ritualistic sacrifices. Purified from sins, they seek heaven. By virtue of their merits, they reach heaven and enjoy the pleasures there. 9.20*

*Having enjoyed the vast heaven and upon exhausting their merits, they return to the earthly plane. In this way, those who follow the Vedic rituals and desire enjoyments come and go in this world. 9.21*

Detailing how inferior and temporary the desires of many are, Lord Krishna describes the other type of devotees who have no other desire except for attaining Him. Lord Krishna declares that for those who show Him undivided devotion without other indulgences, He provides them with what they lack and preserve what they have. It is a promise He makes to all his devotees without material desires trying to attain Him, referred to by the term *yogakshemam*. This is a subtle truth, and only the ones who experience the protection will truly understand. Only when one seeks knowledge above everything else will he see how he is provided and protected. Until one comes to knowledge, he will not experience this. The protection is profound and personal as to how one is survived. Therefore, only out of trust can one take a step towards knowledge.

When one is on the path to attaining the highest knowledge, he might have given up nonviolence and even action. Lord Krishna promises to be the guardian of this *yogi* to protect him in pursuing the path. To attain such Supreme knowledge, dedication and undivided devotion is required. When one is fighting for survival, one will not have the time to attain knowledge. The devotee who could otherwise use his effort and intellect to chase material gain has chosen the path of knowledge. Lord Krishna says He gives them refuge.

## Verse 22

Lord Krishna said,

*Those who meditate on Me and engage in exclusive devotion to Me, I provide them with what they lack and preserve what they have. 9.22*



## Part V

# Ignorant Worship

The ignorant worship different demigods without the correct understanding of God (*Ishvara*). They worship the name and form they know without understanding the unified concept. The demigods (*devas*) are benevolent, heavenly, supernatural higher beings who have some specific power. They are incarnated as demigods because they have accumulated more merits and have not attained the Supreme knowledge. There are different demigods mentioned in the scripture for attaining wealth, health, knowledge, etc. If one worships them with desire, the worshipper's wish will be granted. Lord Krishna says He grants the worshipper's desires through the demigods. Lord Krishna says regardless of whichever demigod the worshippers follow; it is Lord Krishna they follow through the demigods. *Ishvara* is the reason for the demigods and their power.

### The power of the demigods – a story from Kena Upanishads



Agni - The God of Fire

Once the demigods won over the demons, and their victory made them conceited. *Brahman* appeared in the form of a spirit to free them from their ignorance. The spirit asked the demigod of fire; Agni, who are you? For which the fire, God replied, "I am fire, and I can burn anything." The spirit threw a blade of grass and asked him to burn it. The fire God tried his best but could not burn it. Next came the God of wind, Vayu, and said, "I can blow anything". He was asked to blow the blade of grass, but Vayu couldn't. Then Indira, the chief of Gods, arrived and asked who the spirit was to Uma — the mother goddess. To which she replied, "The spirit is *Brahman*, the real power behind you all." Hearing this, Indra and the other gods realized their limitations."

Different devotees show different types of devotion. What they attain in the end is what they ask for. The outcome of their worship is based on their desires. Some desire to attain their demigods, and so they do. Some wish to attain their ancestor and go to the abodes of their ancestors after their death. Those who are very ignorant worship the lower beings like ghosts, and they attain them.

Lord Krishna says those who worship the Supreme attain Him. Some may think it is harder to attain the Lord but it is the same effort to attain Him as attaining anything else.

## Verses 23 – 25

Lord Krishna said,

*Even the devotees, who worship other Gods in full faith, worship Me only, but in ignorance. 9.23*

***I alone Am the enjoyer and the Lord of all the sacrifices, but they who do not know this truth fall and return to take birth. 9.24***

***The worshippers of the demigods reach the demigods, the worshippers of the ancestors go to the ancestors, the worshippers of lower beings (ghosts) go to them, and My worshippers come to Me. 9.25***



## Part VI

# Pure devotion

Once a person attains pure undivided devotion for the Lord, there are no directions, rules, or restrictions for his worship. The correct attitude is all that one requires to worship. Lord Krishna says He will accept anything from the devotee as an offer in such worship.

There are several rituals mentioned in the Vedas to attain material gains. They are sacrifices which must be performed with strict adherence to the guidelines. If done incorrectly, they may not yield the desired fruits or can even cause contrary effects. But there are no rules to express one's devotion.

The devotees perform certain actions out of devotion. Basically, their attitude takes action. For instance, when we have a great reverence for a person, we bow down with respect in his presence. Our attitude comes out as action and, at times, even involuntarily. Similarly, devotees out of devotion perform some actions as a way to express their devotion. This can be some form of worship or other acts like offerings or prayers. The ways we worship are essentially the expression of our attitude and the devotion we have inside us.

Devotion, however, is not easy to build. If one has devotion, it is the result of one's knowledge and other penances. As many of us don't feel devoted easily, our elders have prescribed some actions by which we can build devotion. These are nothing but actions one performs if he is very devoted. Even though one may not feel devoted to begin with, one will eventually build devotion through these actions and worships. These actions build the attitude of devotion in one, and so until one attains undivided attention, one can follow actions-based worship.

To emphasise that attitude is the most important, Lord Krishna says He accepts even the trivial and easily available things, like a leaf, flower, fruit, and water, as an offering during worship if offered with pure devotion. He also says whatever action one does, one should offer his deeds to God. When the action is a sacrifice, be it charity, penance, or even the action of eating, if one has the attitude of offering in them, performing the action will already fulfil the doer. He will not desire any other outcome from it. By offering all actions to God, one will become more aligned with righteousness and understand that everything indeed is God's and that he is just an instrument. He then performs all actions without attachment.

***Oh Lord, you are my Self, Parvathi is my intellect. My **pranas** (life force) are your servants. My body is the temple where you stay. Whatever I experience is your worship, my sleep is the state of your **samadhi**. When I walk, I circumambulate you. Whatever I say is in praise of you. Whatever work I do is worship unto You.***

***-Adi Sankara***

## Verses 26 – 27

Lord Krishna said,

*If one offers to Me in pure devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit or some water — that I accept.* 9.26

*Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give, whatever austerity you perform, do everything as an offering to Me.* 9.27

Lord Krishna speaks of the result a desireless devotee attains. He says His true devotee attains *jivanmukti* (liberation while alive) and *videhamukti* (liberation after death). His devotee is removed from the bondage of all his *karma* both good and bad, and he attains liberation. Lord Krishna refers to this devotee as *sannyasa yoga yukta-atma*. *Yukta-atma* means mind united in the Lord. *Sannyasa* means renouncing, and *yoga* means union, two contrary terms refer to the devotee who has taken up something and left something. The act of renunciation is different based on the *yoga* one is in. In *karma yoga*, renunciation refers to renouncing the fruits of the action. In *bhakti yoga* (the yoga of devotion), it means renouncing the "mineness" and performing all the deeds for God. In *jnana yoga* (the yoga of knowledge), it means renouncing the ego, the "I-ness". When the devotee performs all the deeds as a sacrifice to God, nothing binds him. He attains liberation and lives in great peace until his *prarabdha karma* favours and then departs the world, never to return.

Lord Krishna assures that He sees all beings alike; there is no attraction or aversion towards anyone. He says those who seek Him with devotion are in Him, and He is also in them. Like the fire, though impartial, the warmth is felt only by those who are close to it.

## Verses 28 – 29

Lord Krishna said,

*Acting thus, you will be freed from the bondage of actions yielding good and bad results. With your mind firmly attached to Me through renunciation, you will be liberated and will come to Me.* 9.28

*I am equal to all beings; there is none hateful or dear to Me. But those who worship Me with love and devotion, they are in Me, and I am also in them.* 9.29

Lord Krishna concludes this chapter by glorifying the desireless devotees and the results they attain. Lord Krishna says irrespective of how one has lived his life in the past or how much one has sinned, if he comes to the path of desireless worship, he should be regarded as a saint. For he has left his desires behind and has come to the righteous path.

The sinners who have lived an unrighteous life have taken a big leap to come to the righteous path, which is the path to liberation. Being on the righteous path, one attains purity of mind and knowledge and, finally, a constant state of peace.

Lord Krishna makes another promise to His devotees and asks Arjuna to declare it to the world. He says that His devotees will never perish. Many who begin on the spiritual path are often apprehensive about whether they will succeed or not or even if they will understand the scriptures. They either leave behind their material world or devote most of their time to spiritual learning and practices. Unlike others, they are

not chasing material success, nor have they experienced any spiritual success. It is a path of uncertainty, to begin with. For the devotees to confidently come to this path, Lord Krishna declares they will not perish. The path of *Ishvara* is the path of righteousness, and one must trust that he will not fall back on this path.

It may appear as though the unrighteous progress fast materially, and this may not give one a reason to follow the righteous path. But Lord Krishna says for the righteous, spiritual growth is certain; therefore, one must remove the fear and devote oneself to this path.

## Verses 30 – 31

Lord Krishna said,

*Even if the most sinful worship Me with exclusive devotion, he must be considered righteous, as his resolve is right.* 9.30

*He swiftly becomes virtuous and attains eternal peace. Declare to the world that My devotee never perishes.* 9.31

Having said even a sinner could attain Him, He clarifies other dogmas around the path to liberation.

The *karma kanda* section —the ritualistic part of Vedas has strict rules as to who can perform what kind of rituals and how they must be performed. To perform any ritual from the Vedas, one must first desire the results of sacrifices. Secondly, he must have the qualifications to perform them. What also qualifies one for such rituals is his *ashrama* (stage of a person's life — student, householder, retired, and renounced), his *varna* (the arrangement of the society — the teachers, warriors, merchants, and labourers), the age, gender, and many other factors. Every ritual cannot be performed by all. Some rituals are to be performed only by the kings, others only by the householders and so on. Those who come through the *karma kanda* to the *jnana kanda* (the philosophical part of Vedas) may still have certain misconceptions about who qualifies for knowledge.

A human birth itself is glorified in the scriptures. Human life is rare and is a gift. By just being born a human, one can come to this path and progress spiritually, and attain liberation. Of course, one must have qualifications for it, like the power to discriminate, dispassion, control of the senses and mind, and a deep yearning for liberation. But one's work, lifestyle, age, and gender do not determine one's qualification for knowledge or liberation.

Lord Krishna removes the doubt of many by declaring that anyone can come to this path, be it a woman or a labourer or a merchant, or even one of a very lowly nature.

*Karma kanda* and *jnana kanda* are two different sections of the Vedas. Their content is different. The results one attains from them are different. The qualifications required to pursue them are different. The scripture themselves split them into two. Therefore, *karma kanda* is no reference for *jnana kanda*. Lord Krishna declares the one who truly surrenders to Him will attain Him.

Even if sinners and lowly-natured can attain Him, one can imagine the ease at which righteous people, with their meritorious deeds, can attain Him. In *jnana kanda*, a *brahmin* is someone in *sattva guna* leading a righteous and pure life. The royal (kingly) saints called the *raja rishis* are those on the righteous path, though they may not have renounced entirely. Lord Krishna says the struggle for these people on this path is even lesser, enticing Arjuna to pursue the righteous path.

Lord Krishna says that having come to this place of misery, which is also transient, one must try to attain Him. He concludes this chapter with five suggestions

to attain Him. Attaining Him is also attaining the Self:

1. Keep Me as your goal (i.e., fix your intellect on Me).
2. Fix your mind on Me.
3. Be devoted to Me.
4. Sacrifice all your work unto Me.
5. Surrender unto Me.

## Verses 32 – 34

Lord Krishna said,

*All those who take refuge in Me, the lowly people, women, merchants, or labourers, attain the supreme goal. 9.32*

*So, are there any doubts about the **brahmins** and the saintly kings with pure devotion attaining Me? Having come to the transient and sorrowful world, engage in My worship. 9.33*

*Fix your mind on Me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice unto Me, surrender to Me. Having Me as your Supreme goal, you will certainly reach Me, the Self. 9.34*



**Aum Tat Sat**



# Summary

## Part I — The Royal Knowledge

- Lord Krishna begins this chapter by telling Arjuna that He would reveal a hidden treasure of a secret that is both knowable and experienceable.
- Lord Krishna defines the knowledge of *Brahman* as the royal knowledge, the royal secret, the highest purifier, directly perceivable, righteous, easy to attain, and indestructible.
- Lord Krishna says faith in the knowledge and the instrument and the result of the knowledge is very important to attain the knowledge.

## Part II — The Sovereign Wisdom

- Lord Krishna says the relationship between Him (as *Brahman*), and the world is — *satya mithya sambhanda* which means the truth-delusion relationship.
- The world is a projection on *Brahman*. The world which is projected on *Brahman* is a delusion (*mithya*), and *Brahman* is the truth (*satya*).
- The manifestation of the entire world is because of the unmanifest *Brahman*, just like the reason for the manifestation of the snake is the unmanifested rope.
- Lord Krishna explains *Brahman's* relationship with the world in three statements: all beings exist in Me; I do not exist in them; the beings do not exist in Me.
- *Brahman* does not have any association with anything. Associations only happen when there are two or more objects. *Brahman* is all there is.
- Under two conditions, there will not be any relation between two objects, even if they are in close vicinity to one another. They are: one object has a form or has manifested, and another does not have a form or is in an unmanifest state. One object has to be the truth, and the other a delusion.
- *Ishvara*, though responsible for the creation of the universe, is not bound by his actions. Having no desire or motive for the creation and being unconcerned about the results of His actions, His actions do not yield fruits.
- The beings are born based on their *karma*. Their birth, their forms, and their experiences are all from their *karma*.

## Part III — The Ignorant

- Lord Krishna says the ignorant's desires are so low that even if they are fulfilled, they do not benefit anyone.
- The ignorant's nature is demonic, either full of *rajas guna* or full of *tamas guna*. They are far from *sattva guna* and do not aim to attain *sattva guna*. Because of their nature, they are deluded.

## Part IV — Devotion

- Lord Krishna asks his devotees to seek Him with effort, strong vows, always glorifying Him, and surrendering unto Him with a fixed mind.
- The three stages of devotion are dualistic devotion, one all-pervading God, and non-dualistic devotion.
- Lord Krishna says the devotee with desires worships Him to attain heaven. They regard heaven as their highest goal and aim for it without knowing they have to return after a short term of enjoyment.
- Lord Krishna declares that for those who show him undivided devotion without other indulgences, He provides them with what they lack and preserves what they have.

## Part V — Ignorant Worship

- The ignorant worship different demigods without the correct understanding of God (*Ishvara*).
- If one worships the demigods with desire, the worshipper's wish will be granted. Lord Krishna says He grants the worshipper's desires through the demigods.
- Lord Krishna says regardless of whichever demigod worshippers follow; it is Lord Krishna they follow through the demigods. *Ishvara* is the reason for the demigods and their power.

#### **Part VI — Pure Devotion**

- Once a person attains pure undivided devotion for the Lord, there are no directions, rules, or restrictions for his worship.
- Lord Krishna says He accepts anything from the devotee as an offer in such worship.
- Lord Krishna speaks of the result a desireless devotee attains. He says His true devotee attains *jivanmukti* (liberation while alive) and *videhamukti* after his death.
- Lord Krishna says that His devotees never perish.
- Lord Krishna removes the doubt of many by declaring that anyone can come to the path of liberation, be it a woman or a labourer or a merchant, or even one of a very lowly nature.
- He concludes this chapter with five suggestions to attain Him. Attaining Him is also attaining the Self: keep Me as your goal (i.e. fix your intellect on Me), fix your mind on Me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice all your work unto Me, and surrender to Me.

## Chapter 10

### Vibhuti Yoga



*Vibhuti yoga* means the yoga of the Divine Manifestation of God. In this chapter, Lord Krishna details *Brahman* as the source of the world, mainly re-emphasizing *Brahman* as the material cause. Lord Krishna describes how *Brahman* permeates the whole universe detailing the manifestations and expression of *Brahman*. He says that all the glories of the world are because of *Brahman* and tells Arjuna to see the Truth behind all that is manifested. He says *Brahman* is infinite and has enormous power behind the manifested finite.

It is impossible to know the enormity of the power of that which is not manifested, even though It is the cause of all manifestations and the reason for their sustenance. He concludes this chapter by saying the entire manifestation is a minuscule fraction of *Brahman* and is insignificant to *Brahman*.



## Part I

# Introduction

The earlier chapters detailed the nature of God and His relationship with the created world. In this chapter, Lord Krishna explains Arjuna more about Himself as *Ishvara*. *Ishvara* is *Brahman* with *maya* and is both the material cause and the intellectual cause of all creations. This concept was discussed with the example of clay and pots. The potter who creates the pots is the intellectual cause, and the clay, which is the material for the pots, is the material cause. *Ishvara* is both the cause of creation.

### The characteristics of material cause and intellectual cause:

The material cause of *Ishvara* is responsible for all three states of existence: creation, existence, and dissolution. The clay existed before the pots were made. It exists when the pots exist and will exist when the pot gets destroyed. The intellectual cause is responsible only for the creation. The potter is responsible for creating the pot. After the pot is made, the potter is not required.

When we interact with the pots, we interact with the clay — the material. Similarly, when we interact with the world, we interact with the material cause of it. When we exist in the world, everything is essentially the material cause of the world which is *Ishvara*. Though we know everything is *Ishvara*, we don't see everything as *Ishvara*. This is not because of the lack of knowledge but because the form of the objects conceals their real nature.

To help us understand His divine manifestations and help us see everything as *Ishvara*, Lord Krishna elaborates on His glorious forms, which are referred to as His *vibhuti*. Understanding *Ishvara* through His glorious forms (*vibhuti*) is subtle and hard. That which is subtle and has not yet become wisdom in our intellect must be learned with the help of the mind through practice. Therefore, we will practice seeing *Ishvara's* manifestation in everything.

### Benefits of seeing Ishvara in everything:

1. **For meditation:** *Saguna Brahman (Ishvara)* is often the object of meditation which is necessary to prepare for knowledge (*upasana*).
2. **To remove aversion:** Knowing and seeing everything as *Ishvara* helps remove the aversion from objects and people. Many are deluded about the nature of the world. The world, which is a place of sorrow, is often seen as a place of celebration because we see the world with the attitude of indulgence. All that which we think will yield us joy does, but for a very short time, and what follows is sorrow. The scriptures show us the flaws of the world to remove our delusion and indulgence from it. They show us the real nature of the world. By understanding the world's real nature, we build an aversion towards the world and all the pleasure objects. Building aversion is necessary to build dispassion. After attaining dispassion, to remove the aversion, one is imparted with the knowledge that everything is God.

3. **To remove the Ego:** On attaining power, wealth, position, etc., one's pride also inflates. Knowing everything is the manifestation of *Ishvara* helps one remove his ego.
4. **To remove jealousy:** When we see something we desire in others, we become jealous. The knowledge that everything is from *Ishvara* and is *Ishvara* helps one remove jealousy.
5. **To expand the mind:** Being devoted to one particular name and form restricts the mind. Though it may be helpful in practices like meditation and *japa*, this is a very narrow devotion. The mind must expand and see everything as *Ishvara*.
6. **To remove dualities from one's mind:** The dualities like honour, dishonour, righteousness, and unrighteousness disturb one's mind. By knowing both factors of dualities is *Ishvara*, one will accept them more gracefully.
7. **To attain the attitude of non-duality:** We see ourselves as an entity different from the world and *Ishvara* outside of both. The knowledge about *Ishvara* and His manifestations helps us remove the partitions and see everything as one non-dual element, which is *Brahman*.

Lord Krishna, delighted by Arjuna's keen interest, continues to narrate His glories. The concept of *Ishvara* being subtle and hard to comprehend, He declares He will repeat His manifestation and glories for Arjuna. Lord Krishna says even the demigods and the sages cannot comprehend His birth as He is beginningless, and even they came from His creation. He says that those who understand His nature as both *Nirguna* and *Saguna Brahman* will be free from delusion and all miseries.

## Verses 1 – 3

Lord Krishna said,

*Listen again to My Supreme teachings. As you are delighted to hear Me, desiring your welfare, I shall declare to you. 10.1*

*Neither the demigods nor the great sages know My origin, for it is from Me the demigods and the sages come. 10.2*

*Those who know Me as birthless, beginningless, and as the Supreme Lord of the world, they among the mortals, are free from delusion and all sins. 10.3*



## Part II

# The Manifestations of Nature

*Ishvara* is the creator of the world. The world can be split into two:

1. **The external world:** The world which everyone can see and experience.
2. **The internal world:** The world is experienced by oneself alone, e.g., one's mind, emotions, thoughts, etc.

Lord Krishna says both these worlds come from Him. He talks about different aspects of one's internal world to explain His power behind them.

- Intellect: The power because of which one can understand subtle things is because of *Ishvara*.
- Knowledge: The power to understand, comprehend and the power by which one attains the knowledge of Self is from *Ishvara*.
- Clarity of mind: The mind free from confusion, turbulence and delusion is because of *Ishvara*.
- Forbearance and the ability to forgive are from *Ishvara*.
- Truth, which is a value, is *Ishvara*.
- The power to be able to control the mind is *Ishvara's* power.
- The power to control the senses is *Ishvara's* power.
- The ability to experience happiness is because of *Ishvara*.
- The ability to experience sorrow is also because of *Ishvara*.
- Birth is from *Ishvara*.
- Death is also from *Ishvara*.
- The feeling of fear is because of *Ishvara*.
- The freedom from fear is also because of *Ishvara*.
- The attitude of non-violence is because of *Ishvara*.
- The equanimity of mind is from *Ishvara*.
- The feeling of contentment is from *Ishvara*.
- Penance: Penance is putting the mind and the body through pain to make them stronger. The endurance behind the penance is because of *Ishvara*.
- Charity: The attitude of giving is from *Ishvara*.
- Fame: The fame because of possessing good qualities is because of *Ishvara*.
- Infamy: The infamy because of possessing bad qualities is also because of *Ishvara*.

All the attributes that are mentioned above exist in all beings in different degrees. Lord Krishna says all emotions, temperaments, and dispositions of all beings are from Him. He says that He is both good and bad in one's nature.

One attains body and mind based on one's *karma*. For this reason, everyone has different minds and different emotions. All beings are endowed with different attributes based on the merits and demerits they have acquired through their actions. But their *karma*

functions because of the power of *Ishvara*.

## Verses 4 – 6

Lord Krishna said,

***From Me alone arises different attributes of all beings — intellect, knowledge, non-delusion, forbearance, truth, control of senses and mind, joy and sorrow, birth and death, fear and courage, non-violence, equanimity, contentment, penance, charity, fame and infamy. 10.4 - 10.5***

Having spoken about His power in the inner world, He describes His creation further in the external world. He emphasizes by mentioning the twenty-five sacred personalities responsible for the different paths in the world.

He says that from Brahma (the creator God) came the four saints; they were also called the Kumars. They were born out of Brahma's mind, and having attained dispassion from birth, they withdrew from the world, only devoting themselves to different austerities. They are examples of the path of renunciants. After them came the seven sages and the fourteen manus who took the path of procreation. Through them came all beings. The entire creation that has come from God is non-different from Him.

***The Seven Sages, the four great Saints and the fourteen Manus, from whom all the beings of this world have descended, are all born from My mind. 10.6***





### Part III

## The Phenomenal Expressions

We can perceive only that which is manifested. The unmanifest can never be perceived, and therefore the magnitude of it is incomprehensible. The power behind the manifested is the unmanifest, and its power is unimaginably enormous. By looking at the manifest, we cannot know the magnitude of its unmanifest power. For instance, we can see others' eyes, but we cannot know how well they function. Similarly, *Ishvara's* manifested form is limited. We must not think the limited form is all there is. Though we think he is a finite form, we must know that He is infinite. Lord Krishna says the one who understands both the finite and the infinite will be united with the infinite.

### Verses 7

Lord Krishna said,

*Those who know in truth My glories and My divine powers become united with Me through unshakable devotion; there is no doubt about it. 10.7*

Lord Krishna details how a devotee progresses and His role in a devotee's spiritual progress. Nobody is liberated suddenly. Liberation happens through steps. To even begin to take a step forward towards liberation, one should have had the attitude of devotion with full faith in God. It is easy for most to comprehend that God is the creator of the world and that we are His creations. Many believe that God is the intellectual cause of the world, but many do not contemplate His relationship with the world other than Him being the creator. These devotees show devotion with their limited knowledge.

Devotion is the first stage; without even getting there, it is impossible to attain Self-Realization. Even the scriptures begin with devotion. Eventually, the devotee, with effort and interest, understands the relationship between God and His creations. He understands everything is God. Lord Krishna says He removes ignorance for the one who has devotion and the understanding that *Ishvara* is everything. He describes the characteristics of His devotees:

- These devotees always have *Ishvara* in their minds.
- They have removed their sense organs from external objects and have focused them completely on Him.
- They discuss this great knowledge with one another (other devotees).
- Having *Ishvara* in mind constantly, they always sing and speak of His glories.

Lord Krishna says these devotees who understand *samsara* and seek *Ishvara* without any desires are wise. To these devoted *yogis*, Lord Krishna says He gives them *buddhi yoga* — the *yoga* of intellect by which they attain wisdom. The scriptures talk about two kinds of attainment:

1. Attaining something that one does not have.

2. Attaining something which one already has.

The two kinds of attainments are easy to understand from two kinds of losses:

1. Losing something because of the destruction of the object.
2. Losing something through thought alone.

We all must have experienced the loss of an object or a person through destruction. However, loss because of thought may not be as clear. The story of the ten boys crossing a river (explained in detail in chapter 2) is an example of losing something in the thought alone. In the story, after the ten boys crossed the river, one of them counted them, but there were only nine. Later he realized that he had forgotten to count himself. There was no real loss when one boy was missing. The seeming loss was only due to ignorance.

Anything that is lost because of ignorance (thought) can be attained only through knowledge. Just like in the story, the boy couldn't have gotten the tenth boy in any other way except by knowing he was the tenth. Only through knowledge can one retrieve such a loss. Unlike actions, knowledge does not create anything new; knowledge can only show what is already there. *Brahman* lost because of ignorance, can be attained only through knowledge.

Lord Krishna says that He removes delusion caused by ignorance and guides a devoted *yogi* to knowledge. He says He grants His devotees the Supreme Knowledge sitting in their hearts solely out of compassion for them.

## Verses 8 – 11

Lord Krishna said,

*I am the source of all; from Me, everything evolves. The wise knowing this worship Me with faith and devotion. 10.8*

*Always thinking of Me, with their life (senses) absorbed in Me, enlightening one another and always speaking of Me, they are content and delighted. 10.9*

*Those devotees who are always engaged in My service and worship Me with love, I give the divine *yoga* through which they can attain Me. 10.10*

*Purely out of compassion for them, dwelling within their hearts, I dispel the darkness born of ignorance with the glowing lamp of knowledge. 10.11*

After listening to Lord Krishna thus far, Arjuna speaks his mind. He reiterates his understanding and expresses his faith in Lord Krishna and his reverence for His teachings. The attitude Arjuna holds as a student will delight any teacher and encourage them to share more knowledge with the student.

Though Arjuna understands everything is *Ishvara*, it is hard for him to see that in everything manifested. He likes to view the world as *Ishvara*. He requests Lord Krishna to tell him about His glories.

## Verses 12 – 42

Arjuna said,

*You are the Supreme *Brahman*, the Supreme Shelter, the Highest Purifier, the Primal God, the Unborn and all Pervading. All the sages like, Narad, Asit, Deval, and Vyas, have thus declared You as the self-manifest. And now You declare the same to be true as well. 10.12 - 10.13*

***I believe everything You have told me to be true; neither the demigods nor the demons know You in full. 10.14***

***O Supreme Personality, the Lord of the universe, the God of Gods, the Ruler of the world! You alone know Yourself by your divine potency. 10.15***

***Please tell me Your divine opulence, without reserve, by which You exist and pervade all the worlds. 10.16***

***How shall I know You and be constantly engaged in Your thoughts? And in what forms shall I think of You while meditating, O [Yogin](#)? 10.17***

***Tell me again in detail Your opulence and manifestations, for I am not satiated in hearing Your nectar of a speech. 10.18***

In reply to Arjuna, Lord Krishna said,

***I shall now briefly describe My principal glories to you, for My divine glories are unlimited. 10.19***

***I am the Self, seated within the hearts of all beings. I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all beings. 10.20***

Lord Krishna elaborates on His manifestation. His manifestations are infinite, and so are His powers that are in the state of unmanifest. He gives a few examples to help Arjuna understand and see [Ishvara](#) among the manifested. He takes the example of the Supreme among the manifested and speaks of His presence in them.



***Among the twelve Adityas, I am Vishnu, among the radiance I am the sun, I am Marichi among the winds, among the stars I am the moon. 10.21***

Adityas are protector Gods; they provide for and guard the world. Each Aditya is said to represent a month of the year. Vishnu is the Supreme of them all. Marichi is one of the seven great sages known as Saptarishis.

***Among the Vedas, I am the Sama Veda; I am Indra amongst the demigods; among the senses, I am the mind, and I am the consciousness among living beings. 10.22***

Sama Veda contains the essence of the Rig Vedas and is sung with a rhythm. Indra is the chief of the demigods. The mind, though not a sense organ, controls the sense organs. The consciousness in the otherwise lifeless body is due to [chidabasa](#) - the reflection of the '[cit](#)' in the intellect.

***Among the Rudras, I am Shankar; among the yakshas, I am Kuber. I am fire among the eight Vasus, and among the mountains, I am Meru. 10.23***

Rudras are the deities of destruction which bring distress and make one cry. There are eleven Rudras. They are said to bring circumstances so one can experience very difficult [karma](#), but these situations purify one. When beings are involved in detrimental deeds, they stop them, which brings

them sorrow, but yields greater good later. Shankar is Lord Shiva, one of the three main deities. Yakshas are semi-divine demons that are believed to accumulate and guard treasure. Kubera is the god of wealth, the Principal among yakshas. Vasus are the eight elemental gods (including the five primordial elements), representing aspects of nature. The other three vasus are the sun, the moon and the stars. Meru is a sacred five peaked mountain considered to be the center of all the physical, metaphysical and spiritual universes.



***Among the priests, I am Brihaspati; among the generals, I am Skanda, and among the reservoirs of water, I am the ocean.*** 10.24

Brihaspati is the spiritual teacher of the demigods. Skanda is the son of Shiva, who is a great leader.

***Among the great sages, I am Bhrigu; among words, I am the one-syllable Om; among sacrifices, I am the japa; among the immovable, I am the Himalayas.*** 10.25

Bhrigu is one of the seven great sages. He was the first compiler of predictive astrology and the author of Bhrigu Samhita. Om is a spiritual symbol; it refers to the Atman (the Soul) and Brahman.

***The goal which all the Vedas declare, which all austerities aim at and for which they lead a life of continence, I will tell you briefly: it is Om. This syllable Om is indeed Brahman. This syllable is the Highest. He who knows this syllable obtains all that he desires.***

— Katha Upanishad, 1.2.15-1.2.16

Japa is the yajna (sacrifice) of repeating the Saguna Brahman or a deity's name in mind and not thinking of anything else. It is the best penance for taming the mind. Japa does not require any other objects to perform and is also a non-violent yajna. It is therefore considered superior.

***Amongst the trees, I am the peepal; I am Narada among the celestial sages. Among the Gandharvas, I am Chitraratha, and I am Kapila among the***



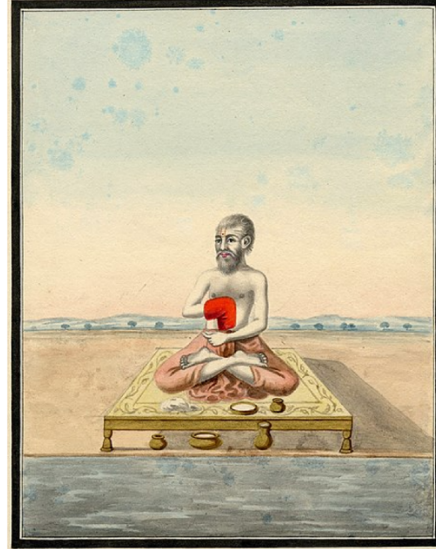
***Siddhas. 10.26***

*The peepal tree has a long lifespan and is very big in magnitude. Narada is a great sage, born in the celestial abode with the knowledge of Self which is unique because celestial beings do not generally have the knowledge of the Self. They are born as demigods in the celestial abodes at the beginning of the creation as they have accumulated lots of merits. Gandharvas are celestial beings known for their art and music. Chitraratha is the most brilliant among them all. Siddhas are those who have attained virtue, wisdom and dispassion from birth because of the penance performed in their earlier births. Sage Kapila is one of the most renowned Siddhas.*

Narada



Kapila



***Know me as Ucchaihshrava among the horses, born of nectar, among the lordly elephants I am the Airavata, and the king among humans. 10.27***

*The churning of the ocean of milk is a mythological story narrated in many Hindu texts. Ucchaihshrava is the horse, and Airavata — a white elephant that came up during the churning of the ocean, which Indra took.*

Ucchaihshrava



Airavata



***Among the weapons, I am Vajra (thunderbolt); among cows, I am Kamadhenu; I am Kandarpa, the cause for procreation; among serpents, I am Vasuki. 10.28***



*A vajra is an indestructible and firm weapon made from the bones of the sage Dadhichi to kill a demon. Kamadhenu is a cow that yields all the desired objects. Kandarpa is the God of Love and is the reason for procreation. Vasuki is a mythological serpent coiled around Shiva's neck. Vasuki was used for churning the ocean to extract nectar.*

Mahakala holding vajra weapon



Kamadhenu



Kandarpa



Vasuki snake used as a churning rope



***Amongst the non-poisonous snakes, I am Anant; I am Varuna among the water deities; I am Aryama among the departed ancestors; among the controllers, I am Yamraj — the Lord of death. 10.29***

*Anant is a celestial snake on which Lord Vishnu rests. Varuna is the Lord of the oceans. Aryaman is the head of the world of the departed ancestors. Yama is the Lord of Death.*



***I am Prahlada among the demons, among reckoners I am Time, among animals I am lion and Garuda among the birds. 10.30***

Though Prahlad was the son of the demon king, Hiranyakashipu, he was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. Garuda is described as the king of birds and is the vehicle of Lord Vishnu.

***Of the purifiers, I am the wind, among the warriors I am Rama, among the fishes, I am the shark, among the rivers I am Ganga. 10.31***

***Know Me as the beginning, the middle and the end of all creations; of all wisdom, I am the knowledge of the Self. I am the debate in all arguments. 10.32***

***I am the beginning "A" amongst all alphabets; I am the dual word among all grammatical compounds. I am the inexhaustible, endless Time, and I am the all-faced witness, the dispenser of fruits of actions of all. 10.33***

***I am all seizing death and the origin of all that is to be. I am fame, prosperity, speech, memory, intelligence, firmness and forgiveness among the female qualities. 10.34***

***Among the hymns, I am Brihatsama, among the metrics of mantras, I am Gayatri, among the twelve months, I am Margashirsha (December-January). And among the seasons, I am the flower-bearing spring. 10.35***

Brihatsama is the melody in Samaveda. Gayatri is an arrangement of words in a mantra for pleasing rhythmic sound. A prevalent mantra set in this arrangement is called the Gayathri mantra.



Gayatri mantra personified as a goddess



Gayatri mantra

om bhur bhuvah svah  
tat savitur varenyam  
bhargo devasya dhimahi  
dhiyo yo nah prachodayat  
– Rig Veda 3.62.10

We meditate on the glory of that Being  
who has produced this universe;  
may She enlighten our minds  
- translated by Swami Vivekananda

*I am the gambling of the deceitful; I am the glory of the glorious, I am the victory of the victorious, the resolve of the resolute, and the goodness in the good.* 10.36

*Of the descendants of Vrishni, I am Lord Krishna, and among the Pandavas, I am Arjun. I am Vyasa among the sages and Shukracharya among the knowers of the scriptures.* 10.37

*Vrishni was the clan Lord Krishna took avatar in. Shukracharya is the guru of demons.*

Shukracharya



Draupadi and Pandavas



*I am the punishment among the ones who punish; I am the proper conduct among those who seek victory. Among the secrets, I am the silence. And I am the wisdom among knowers.* 10.38

Lord Krishna concludes this chapter by saying, He is infinite, and His glory cannot be judged based on the limited manifestations.

***I am the seed of all beings. There is no being moving or unmoving that can exist without Me.*** 10.39

***There is no end to My divine manifestations; what I have said is only a brief indication of them.*** 10.40

***Whatever is beautiful, glorious, or powerful, know that to be the manifestation from a spark of My splendour.*** 10.41

***But what is the need for all the elaborations? Know that I pervade and support the entire world by a small fraction of Myself.*** 10.42



**Aum Tat Sat**

# Summary

## Part I — Introduction

- *Ishvara* is *Brahman* with *Maya* and is both the material cause and the intellectual cause of all creations.
- To help us understand His divine manifestations and help us see everything as *Ishvara*, Lord Krishna elaborates on His glorious forms, which are referred to as His *vibhuti*.
- Seeing *Ishvara* in everything is necessary for meditation, to remove aversion, ego and jealousy, to expand the mind, to remove dualities from one's mind, and to attain the attitude of non-duality.

## Part II — The Manifestations of Nature

- Lord Krishna talks about different aspects of one's internal world to explain His power behind them. He says intellect, knowledge, clarity of mind, forbearance, truth, the power to be able to control the mind and the senses, the ability to experience happiness and sorrow, birth, death, fear, freedom from fear, non-violence, equanimity of mind, the feeling of contentment, penance, charity, fame, infamy is because of *Ishvara*.

## Part III — The Phenomenal Expressions

- Lord Krishna says the one who understands both the finite and the infinite will be united with the infinite.
- Lord Krishna says devotion is the first stage, and without even getting there, it is impossible to attain Self- Realization.
- He describes the characteristics of His devotees: these devotees always have *Ishvara* in their minds, they have removed their sense organs from external objects and have focused them completely on Him, they discuss this great knowledge with one another (other devotees), having *Ishvara* in mind constantly, they always sing and speak of His glories.
- Anything that is lost because of ignorance (thought) can be attained only through knowledge.
- Lord Krishna says that He removes delusion caused by ignorance and guides a devoted *yogi* to knowledge. He says He grants His devotees the Supreme Knowledge sitting in their hearts solely out of compassion for them.
- Arjuna requests Lord Krishna to tell him about Lord Krishna's glories.
- Lord Krishna elaborates on His manifestation. His manifestations are infinite, and so are His powers in the state of unmanifest. He gives examples to help Arjuna understand and see *Ishvara* among the manifested. He takes the example of the Supreme among the manifested and tells Arjuna about His presence.
- Lord Krishna concludes this chapter by saying, He is infinite, and His glory cannot be judged based on the limited manifestations.

# Chapter 11

## Vishwaroopa Darshana Yoga



Lord Krishna detailed His Glories and His Divine Manifestations in the previous chapter. Now He shows them to Arjuna at his request. Along with Arjuna, Sanjaya also views them with the help of his divine vision. Arjuna and Sanjaya describe what they see and how they feel about viewing Lord Krishna's manifestations. Through their description, we shall 'see' the *Vishwaroopa*.



## Part I

# Introduction

In the previous chapter, Lord Krishna detailed Arjuna about His manifestations. Intrigued by the description, Arjuna desires to see them and requests Lord Krishna to show him His glories. Lord Krishna accepts Arjuna's requests and grants him a special vision to see His forms. This vision is called *divya-drishti*, which means divine perception. Lord Krishna reveals His *Vishwaroopa* to Arjuna. *Vishva* means all, and *roopa* means form. *Vishwaroopa* means talking up all forms. Lord Krishna shows His special form in which the entire universe is contained within Him. With this divine perception, Arjuna sees His many manifestations, and so does Sanjaya, who is narrating the Kurukshetra battlefield to the blind king Dhritarashtra.

Arjuna and Sanjaya describe the *Vishwaroopa* as they witness it. Seeing the forms of the Lord, Arjuna understands Lord Krishna's magnificence and develops a deep reverence for Him.

Everything manifested is the material cause of *Ishvara*. Therefore, everything is *Ishvara*, so much as the pots made of clay are all clay. But we are unable to see the world and all manifestations as *Ishvara*. Though we see everything through the eyes, our mind comprehends what we see, and when the mind is clouded by attachment and aversion, it distorts our comprehension. By removing the attachment and aversion from our minds and by attaining knowledge of *Ishvara*, we will be able to see all the divine manifestations as *Ishvara*.

The glimpse of *Vishwaroopa* helps us attain faith in the knowledge of the Self and remove aversion and attachment. *Vishwaroopa* helps us build the attitude that everything is *Ishvara*. For this reason, Arjuna's and Sanjaya's description of *Vishwaroopa* is detailed in this chapter. However, the real *Vishwaroopa* is already available to our experience, which we are unable to perceive with our clouded minds.

## Verses 1 – 8

Arjuna said,

***Out of compassion for me, You have revealed the Supreme secret of knowledge regarding the Self; this has dispelled my delusion. 11.1***

The Supreme secret mentioned is addressed by using the word *Adhyatma*, which means the knowledge which differentiates between the Self and non-Self.

***I have heard from You in detail about the origin and dissolution of beings and Your inexhaustible glories. 11.2***

***O Supreme Lord, You have thus precisely described Yourself to me, I wish to see***

***Your divine glorious form. 11.3***

***O Lord, please reveal me Your imperishable form if You consider me worthy of beholding it. 11.4***

Further to Arjuna's pleas, Lord Krishna said,

***Behold, by hundreds and thousands are My forms, varied in kind, colour, and shape. 11.5***

***Behold the Adityas, the Vasus, the Rudras, the Ashwins and also the Maruts, and many more marvels never seen before. 11.6***

***Behold now, in this form of Mine, the entire universe with the moving and the unmoving or anything else you wish to see. 11.7***

***But you cannot see these with your own eyes, so I give you the divine vision. Behold, My divine opulence! 11.8***





## Part II

# Sanjaya's Description

Sanjaya has been narrating the blind king Dhritarashtra about the battlefield and the conversations between Arjuna and Lord Krishna. Along with Arjuna, Sanjaya also sees the grand manifestations.

Sanjaya has also been granted divine perception by the great sage Vyasa; with that, he is able to see the *Vishwaroopa* of Lord Krishna. He describes to the blind king what is being shown and the emotions passing through Arjuna's mind on seeing the Cosmic Forms.

Arjuna is struck by wonder on seeing the forms; he experiences horripilation instantly in awe. Sanjaya describes the change in Arjuna's attitude on seeing the *Vishwaroopa*.

## Verses 9 – 14

Sanjaya said,

***O King, having spoken thus, the great Lord of *yoga*, Sri Lord Krishna, displayed His magnificent form to Arjuna. 11.9***

***With many faces and eyes, with all wonderful universal forms, decorated with many heavenly ornaments and holding many kinds of heavenly weapons, wearing divine garlands, and anointed with celestial fragrance, He revealed Himself as the effulgent infinite Lord facing all directions. 11.10-11-11***

***The brilliance of a thousand suns blazing forth all at once in the sky would not match up to the effulgence of the Supreme One. 11.12***

***There, in the body of the God of gods, Arjuna saw the totality of the entire Universe with its many divisions together in one. 11.13***

***Then, Arjuna, overwhelmed by wonder, with hair standing on the end, bowed his head, joined his palms in salutation before the Lord and addressed him thus. 11.14***



### Part III

## Arjuna's Description

Arjuna, by himself, describes what he sees in the body of the Lord. On seeing the manifestations in Lord Krishna's body, he is taken over by different emotions. First of all, he is marvelled by sight, and later, by seeing some wrathful sights, he is taken over by fear. And finally, by seeing the magnitude of Lord Krishna's manifestation, he is overwhelmed by devotion.

Suddenly seeing the manifestations in Lord Krishna's body, Arjuna is taken over by wonder. The awed Arjuna describes what he sees.

### Verses 15 – 22

Arjuna said,

*I behold within your body all the gods and clusters of different beings, celestial sages and serpents, and Lord Brahma seated on the lotus. 11.15*

*I behold your infinite form in all directions, with many arms, stomachs, faces and eyes. O Lord of the universe, I see no end, middle or beginning of you. 11.16*

*I see your form everywhere with a crown, mace and disc, shining everywhere and illuminating all like the blazing sun, difficult to behold and hard to comprehend. 11.17*

*You are the Imperishable, the Supreme Being to be known through the scriptures. You are the sustainer of all creations; You are the guardian of the eternal religion; I deem You as the Supreme Person — **Purusha**. 11.18*

*I see You without a beginning, middle, or end, infinite in power, with many arms. The sun and the moon being Your eyes, the burning fire Your face and the whole universe seared by Your radiance. 11.19*

Arjuna, who was thus far awed by the magnificent sight of **Vishwaroopa**, is about to see the dark aspects of it. He sees destruction, which is also a part of manifestation, from wonder, Arjuna's attitude changes to fear.

*Verily, the space between heaven and earth and all the directions are pervaded by You alone. Seeing your marvellous and fearful form, the three worlds are trembling in fear, O Supreme One. 11.20*

*All the demigods are entering into You; some out of fear offer prayer to You with joint palms. The great sages and perfected beings are extolling You with hymns and prayers. 11.21*

*The Rudras, Adityas, Vasus, Sadhyas, Vishwa Devas, the Ashwins, Maruts,*

*ancestors and hosts of Gandharvas, Yakshas, Asuras and Siddhas — they are all looking at You in marvel. 11.22*



### The three kinds of existence

According to the scriptures, there are three kinds of existence, also known as the three notions of reality. They are:

1. Subjective reality (*pratibhasika*)
2. Transactional reality (*vyavaharika*)
3. Absolute Reality (*paramarthika*)

**Subjective reality (*Pratibhasika*):** *Pratibhasika* means existing only in appearance. The experience or existence which is true to one's experience alone is called subjective reality. For example, dreams are subjective reality. Seeing the snake in the rope is also a subjective reality. Subjective reality is one's own creation. It can be called imagination. This reality has no basis, nor does it have an existence. It is one's illusion.

**Transactional reality (*Vyavaharika*):** *Vyavaharika* means engagement in affairs. This is the reality pertaining to the physical world. The reality which exists for oneself and others is transactional reality.

**Absolute Reality (*Paramarthika*):** *Param* means the highest, and *arthika* means pertaining to the real substance of a thing. Absolute Reality exists in all three periods of time (the past, present, and future). It is *Brahman* which exists but has not come to form.

Absolute Reality is hard to know as everything that we do is at the transactional level. It cannot be described in words. Everything being told or written is also at the transactional level. Absolute Reality cannot be perceived by senses or understood analytically by the mind. None other than *Brahman* knows the Absolute Reality of existence. The union with *Brahman* is the only way to experience it.

**What reality does *Vishwaroopa* — the divine vision of Arjuna come under?**

It is apparent that the *Vishwaroopa* does not fall under the Absolute Reality of existence. The Absolute Reality of existence cannot be seen as it is not in the manifest state. It is also not a transactional reality, as it is not experienced by others, including those on the battlefield. *Vishwaroopa* is also not Arjuna's imagination to be a subjective reality.

*Vishwaroopa* does not fall under any of these existences. It is beyond all three kinds of existence. It is a very rare experience, and such an existence is only experienced by devotees because of their efforts.

Having experienced *Vishwaroopa*, Arjuna was overwhelmed by wonder; he now sees some gruesome images which frighten him. The wonder fades into fear. Arjuna expresses it by telling Lord Krishna, "*Everyone I see within Your form fear You, and so do I.*"

### Fear

The two main reasons for fear, according to the scriptures, are:

1. **Separation:** Dualism is the root cause of fear. When the mind separates one from another, fear arises, even if there is no separation in reality.
2. **Giving reality:** When an object is given reality, it can cause fear. For example, those who do not believe in God do not fear God. Giving reality to the delusional snake in the rope causes fear.

Therefore, if something causes fear in us, it is because we have given it the power to

do so. Fear itself is not a negative aspect. Fear is necessary to protect ourselves. Fear is maturity. Fear also guides us on the right path. Some are righteous only because of fear. Until one matures to be righteous for the sake of being righteous, it is fear that guards him. Some stop sinning only because of fear. Some others even enter the path of devotion because of fear. Fear, therefore, is not considered entirely bad; it is the path of development until one comes to the right path out of understanding and knowledge.

Arjuna's fear is because he does not fit himself in the *Vishwaroopa*. He sees everything within the body of God, leaving himself out. When he saw creation and protection, he was in wonder. The third aspect of manifestation — destruction is gruesome and terrifies Arjuna. He fears the same Being he marvelled at earlier. Arjuna's fear is because of his separation from God and because of seeing God as an entity of destruction. Arjuna expresses his fear as below:

## Verses 23 – 30

Arjuna said,

*O Lord, having seen Your magnificent form with many mouths, eyes, arms, thighs, feet, stomachs, and terrifying teeth, the world trembles in fear, and so do I.* 11.23

*O Vishnu, seeing You touching the sky, illuminating in many colours, with mouths wide open and with huge blazing eyes, my heart is trembling with fear, unable to maintain courage or peace of mind.* 11.24

*Seeing Your mouths with fearful tusks resembling the blazing fire at the time of the universal annihilation, I am distraught and find no peace. O Lord, please be gracious to me.* 11.25

*All the sons of Dhritarashtra, along with their allied kings, including Bhishma, Drona and Karna, along with our chief warriors, are rushing into Your fearsome mouths with terrible teeth. Some are found with their head caught in between Your teeth and crushed to powder.* 11.26-11.27

*As the rivers flow directly into the ocean, so do these great warriors enter into Your flaming mouths.* 11.28

*Like the moths rush into the blazing fire for their own destruction, all the beings are entering Your mouths with great speed to perish.* 11.29

*You are licking and devouring all the beings from all directions with Your blazing mouths. O Lord, You are searing the entire universe with fierce radiance.* 11.30.



## Part IV

# Arjuna's Distress

## Verses 31

Having known *Ishvara* as the benevolent creator and protector, Arjuna is bewildered and agitated on seeing Lord Krishna as the fierce destructor. Being threatened by what he had just witnessed, out of confusion, Arjuna asks Lord Krishna to tell him who He really is and what His purpose is. Arjuna said,

*Tell me who You are, so fierce in form. O Lord, I bow unto You, have mercy.  
You, the Primeval being, I wish to know You and Your work. 11.31*

In reply to Arjuna, Lord Krishna says He is Time, the destroyer of the universe. Time controls the lifespan of all manifestations. Lord Krishna asks Arjuna to rise and win the battle. He reveals that He has already decided to annihilate the unrighteousness to restore righteousness for the welfare of the world. He asks Arjuna to be an instrument for it.

### Difference between an instrument and a doer

A warrior on the battlefield performing the actions is a doer (*kartha*). The weapon he uses to perform the actions is the instrument (*karana*). The difference between the doer and the instrument are:

- The doer has choices. He can choose his actions. If one does not do anything about a situation, then he chooses not to do anything. Instruments do not have a choice in the hands of the doer.
- When there are choices, there is delusion and confusion.
- The doer has to experience the consequences of his actions. He has to experience the merits and demerits of his actions. The instrument does not have consequences for anything attained through it.

### Why is Arjuna asked to be an instrument?

Lord Krishna insists that Arjuna become an instrument so that he does what is good for all and himself. It is essentially asking him to do *karma yoga*. The war is his duty, and so Lord Krishna asks him to fulfil his duty. It is important that Arjuna does his duty and leaves the rest to God.

Many measure their performance solely on the results they attain. Even duties performed well can fail. Sometimes fulfilling one's duties with utmost perfection may not benefit others. People believe that only if their duty benefits others has it been done properly. The outcome of one's duty is not the right scale to measure the quality of one's performance. Our duty will benefit others only if they have the merits to receive them. Whether or not our duties succeed depends on the person we perform them for. It is based on their *karma*, not ours.

Lord Krishna tells Arjuna to perform his duty and informs him that the outcome of it is not in Arjuna's hands. Lord Krishna is an *avatar* who has descended to destroy unrighteousness. He declares it is His duty to strengthen righteousness and that He has already slain the unrighteous. This declaration removes Arjuna's fear of the outcome

of the war.

## Verse 32 – 34

Lord Krishna said,

*I am Time, the destroyer of all that has come forth to annihilate the world. Even without you, the warriors in the opposing army will not be spared. 11.32*

*Therefore, stand up and win glory. Conquer your enemies and enjoy an opulent kingdom. Verily, by Me and none other, they have been already slain; you be a mere instrument, O Arjuna! 11.33*

*Therefore, arise for the battle. Conquer the enemies and enjoy fame and a prosperous kingdom. All these warriors have already been slain by Me; you are but an instrument. 11.34*





## Part IV

# Arjuna's Devotion

Arjuna, who was overwhelmed with fear, is now overwhelmed with devotion. Devotion is an intense affection and faith in God. Some feel devoted only when they are in distress. When they have no other option, they turn to devotion. Only in such situations can their ego understand that they cannot overcome distress by themselves. They look to God for help, and this is their devotion.

Different people have different reasons to show devotion, but the right kind of devotion comes only from knowledge. We like or dislike someone based on our knowledge about them. And we gather knowledge about those we like. Similarly, devotion comes with knowledge, and knowledge comes with devotion. Devotion and knowledge are inseparable.

The reason for Arjuna's devotion is his knowledge through *Vishwaroopa*. He has gained knowledge of *Ishvara* and, therefore, has developed faith in Him.

## Verse 35 – 36

Sanjaya tells the king about the change in Arjuna's attitude. Sanjaya said,

*Hearing these words of Lord Krishna, Arjun trembling in fear, joined his palms, bowed before Bhagavan Krishna, and spoke in a faltering voice.* 11.35

Arjuna said,

*It is appropriate that the world rejoices in Your praise. The demons flee in all directions, and the perfected saints bow to You.* 11.36

Arjuna, delighted by understanding *Ishvara's* glory, tells Lord Krishna, "You are existence and non-existence, the manifest and the unmanifest". Arjuna addresses Lord Krishna as the knower of all. He makes a reference to the *Brahman* aspect of Lord Krishna. He describes *Nirguna Brahman*.

### The knower of all

The mind knows and perceives the world through the senses. The mind is the knower. When the mind knows, there is something beyond the mind which knows that the mind knows. We know both what we know and what we don't know. This something that knows the mind is the consciousness. When the mind watches the world, there is something that watches the mind. The consciousness is the witness of the mind and its thoughts. Through thoughts, the consciousness perceives the world.

If there is a knower, then there is an object to be known. This may sound like duality, but there is only one non-dual consciousness. The knower is the known. When we dream, our thoughts take forms. The thought of an elephant takes the form of an elephant. The one who sees the elephant, the viewer, is also a thought. The object and the viewer are both one. When one rejoices in the dream, he is rejoicing in himself. When one fears in his dream, he fears himself. In the dream, the knower and the known

are one and the same. The scriptures describe the world as one Cosmic dream, where there is only *Brahman* dreaming. The known and the knower are both *Brahman*.

Having understood this, Arjuna addresses Lord Krishna as the knower of all. The knowledge of *Brahman* is considered the most superior of all knowledge. This is because when the object of knowledge changes, the knowledge changes too. Therefore, all other knowledge is subject to change. Only the knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahman jnana*) is unchangeable, as the object of the knowledge (*Brahman*) is unchanging.

Arjuna, having understood Lord Krishna as the '*cit*' — the consciousness aspect of *Brahman* says Lord Krishna is also the '*sat*' — the existence aspects of *Brahman*.

*Ishvara* is the '*sat*' form of the entire universe; the world is created and sustained because of *Ishvara*. The ocean sustains the waves. The ocean gives the existence for the waves and is the reason for the waves. If the ocean is gone, the waves will be gone too. Arjuna tells Lord Krishna, *You are both the illuminator, the reason of creation, and You are the created.*

## Verse 37 – 55

Arjuna said,

*O Greatest of all, the Creator of Lord Brahma, how would they not bow to You? You are the abode of the universe; You are the Imperishable, the manifest and the unmanifest, You are the infinite Lord of Lords.* 11.37

*You are the Origin of the Gods, the Purusha; You are the sole refuge of the universe, You are the knower, the knowable and the Supreme abode. Oh, being of infinite forms, the whole universe is pervaded by You.* 11.38

*You are the God of wind, death, fire, water, and the moon. You are the creator of Brahma — the great-grandfather of all beings. Salutation to You a thousand times, and salutations to You again and yet again!* 11.39

*O embodiment of all, my salutation to You from the front and back, my salutations to You from all sides! You, being the infinite power and potency, pervade the entire universe.* 11.40

*Whatever I have spoken to You thinking of You merely as a friend, addressing You as Hey Krishna, Hey Yadava, Hey Friend, unknowing of Your glories or Your forms, O Great One, and for whatever way I have shown You disrespect, while playing, walking, resting, sitting, eating, when alone, or with others — for all that I pray for Your forgiveness.* 11.41-11.42

*You are the father of the world, of all the moving and unmoving; You are the worthiest of worship and the supreme teacher. There is none equal to You in all the three worlds, then how can there be anyone greater than You? O being of incomparable greatness.* 11. 43

*Therefore, by bowing down and prostrating before You, I pray for Your mercy, dear Lord! As a father forgives his son, a friend, his friend, a lover, his beloved, please forgive me, O Lord.* 11. 44

Arjuna has seen and is delighted that he was privileged to see the *Vishwaroopa*; at the same time, he is not able to assimilate that both the creation and destruction are from the same magnificent one.

***I am delighted having seen Your universal form, which I have never seen before, yet my mind is agitated with fear. O Lord of Lords, the shelter of the universe, have mercy on me and show me Your former form.*** 11.45

Lord Krishna is an *avatar* of Vishnu, and so Arjuna asks Lord Krishna to show him *Vishnuroopa* instead of *Vishwaroopa*. Vishnu has four arms, and therefore, he said,

***O thousand-armed embodiment of all creation, I wish to see You in Your four-armed form, wearing the crown with the mace and a disc.*** 11.46

Lord Krishna said,

***Arjuna, being pleased with you, I have shown you this Supreme universal, infinite and primaeval form through My power, which no one has ever seen before.*** 11.47

***Neither by the study of Vedas nor by sacrifices, charity, or even by severe austerity has anyone in the human plane seen such a form as you have seen.*** 11.48

***Don't be terrified by seeing this terrible form of Mine. Dispel the fear and, with a cheerful heart, behold Me again in My previous form.*** 11.49

Sanjaya said,

***Having spoken thus, Lord Krishna assumed His previous form again. He then comforted the terrified Arjuna by appearing in His graceful form.*** 11.50

Arjuna said,

***O Lord Krishna, seeing this gentle human form of Yours, I am calm and composed again.*** 11.51

Lord Krishna says that only through pure undivided devotion and not by any other means can one see the *Vishwaroopa*. He concludes the chapter by talking about the steps to attain Him, which are :

1. By doing work for God (*karma yoga*).
2. Having Him as the Goal.
3. Being devoted to Him.
4. Being freed from all attachment
5. Being devoid of all hatred.

Lord Krishan said,

***This form of Mine that you are seeing is indeed very rare to see. Even the demigods are ever eager to see it. Neither by the study of the Vedas, nor by strict austerities, or charity, or by sacrifices, can I be seen as you have seen Me in this eternal form.*** 11.52- 11.53

***Only by single-minded devotion can I be known in My eternal form, seen and attained.*** 11.54

***O Arjuna, the one who engages in action for Me, looks upon Me as the Supreme Goal, devoted to Me, unattached and devoid of all enmity comes to***

***Me.*** 11.55



**Aum Tat Sat**

# Summary

## Part I – Introduction

- Arjuna requests Lord Krishna to show him His glories.
- Lord Krishna accepts Arjuna's requests and grants him a special vision to see His forms.
- Arjuna and Sanjaya describe the *Vishwaroopa* as they witness it
- Everything manifested is the material cause of *Ishvara*.
- *Vishwaroopa* helps us build the attitude that everything is *Ishvara*. For this reason, Arjuna's and Sanjaya's description of *Vishwaroopa* is detailed in this chapter.

## Part II – Sanjaya's Description

- Sanjaya has also been granted divine perception by the great sage Vyasa; with that, he is able to see the *Vishwaroopa* of Lord Krishna.

## Part III – Arjuna's Description

- Suddenly seeing the manifestations in Lord Krishna's body, Arjuna is taken over by wonder.
- Arjuna, who was thus far awed by the magnificent sight of *Vishwaroopa*, is about to see the dark aspects of it. He sees destruction, which is also a part of manifestation. From wonder, Arjuna's attitude changes to fear.
- The three kinds of existence; also known as the three notions of reality, are: subjective reality (*pratibhasika*), transactional reality (*vyavaharika*), and Absolute Reality (*paramarthika*). *Vishwaroopa* does not fall under any of the three.
- The two main reasons for fear, according to the scriptures, are: Separation and Giving reality.
- Arjuna's fear was because he did not fit himself in the *Vishwaroopa*. Arjuna's fear is because of his separation from God and his seeing God as an entity of destruction.

## Part IV – Arjuna's Distress

- Arjuna is bewildered and agitated on seeing Lord Krishna as the fierce destructor.
- Lord Krishna tells Arjuna to perform his duty and informs him that the outcome of it is not in Arjuna's hands. He asks Arjuna to be an instrument.

## Part V – Arjuna's Devotion

- Devotion comes with knowledge, and knowledge comes with devotion.
- The reason for Arjuna's devotion is his knowledge through *Vishwaroopa*.
- Arjuna understands and reiterates to Lord Krishna, "*You are existence and non-existence, the manifest and the unmanifest*". Arjuna addresses Lord Krishna as the knower of all.
- The scriptures describe the world as one Cosmic dream, where there is only *Brahman* dreaming. The known and the knower are both *Brahman*.
- Arjuna asks Lord Krishna to show him *Vishnuroopa* instead of *Vishwaroopa*.
- Lord Krishna says it only through pure undivided devotion and not by any other means can one see the *Vishwaroopa*.
- He concludes the chapter by talking about the steps to attain Him, which are: by doing work for God (*karma yoga*), having Him as the Goal, being devoted to Him, being freed from all attachment, being devoid of all hatred.

# Chapter 12

## Bhakti Yoga



*Bhakti* means devotion. Lord Krishna discusses the details and the importance of devotion. He explains five kinds of devotion, four of which are *saguna* devotion and the fifth being *nirguna* devotion. He emphasizes staying in a more suitable level of devotion for which one qualifies rather than following the higher level of devotion one does not qualify for. He concludes the chapter by detailing the characteristics of the wise.





## Part I

# Introduction

Devotion is hard to define because devotion is expressed in different ways by different people. Like penance, no one action can define devotion. When one says he has undertaken a penance, we will know which one it is. There are several forms of penance, like fasting, *japa*, learning the scripture, and non-speaking. Penance is taking up pain deliberately to attain perfection and growth. Pain helps in maturity and growth. When one says he is performing penance, one thing certain is that he is taking up hardship to attain growth. This is a general definition of penance. There are two characteristics of penance:

- General characteristics (*samanya lakshana*)
- Special characteristics (*vishesh lakshana*)

Devotion also has these two characteristics. The special characteristics of devotion are discussed in this chapter after discussing some general characteristics.

### General characteristics of devotion

These are the characteristics of devotion that are present in all forms of devotion:

- Affection towards *Ishvara* (God).
- Belief in the existence of *Ishvara*
- Complete faith in *Ishvara*.
- Surrendering only to *Ishvara* and not any other material aspects of the world.

Though many may have affection towards God, there is variation in the degree of affection. The right scale to measure affection is sacrifice. How much one is ready to sacrifice for the other shows one's love and devotion for them. Based on one's affection, we will see different stages of devotion, starting from a beginner on the path till the liberated.

### The root cause of devotion

The root cause of devotion is knowledge. How much we are attached to something, or someone is based on how much we know them. Attachment (or aversion) to an object or a person develops with the knowledge we have about them. And we also try to attain more knowledge about those we are attached to. Therefore, with knowledge, devotion grows, and with devotion, knowledge grows. They are both dependent on each other.

Devotion, though an attitude, manifests as actions based on one's cultural background. A devotee shows his devotion in many different ways. As the devotion develops, the display of devotion also varies. Based on one's devotion, his lifestyle changes. Lord Krishna details actions arriving from devotion in this chapter.

### Types of devotees

There are many types of devotees. In the earlier chapters, Lord Krishna classified the devotees into four types:

1. The distressed
2. The pleasure seekers

3. The knowledge seekers
4. The wise

We can further classify them as:

- Devotion with desire (*Sakama bhakti*)
- Devotion without desire (*Nishkama bhakti*)

Whether with desire or not, being a devotee is already progress from being a non-believer. Desirous worship is not considered wrong, as desires fulfilled through righteous means are not wrong. Even devotees without desires can ask for well-being to progress spiritually or for purity of the mind. These desires are to attain God, and so they are non-desirous worship.

### Two divisions of devotion

1. Devotion to *Ishvara* (*Saguna Bhakti*)
2. Devotion to formless *Brahman* (*Nirguna Bhakti*)

Two divisions of devotion



### Benefits of devotion

- Mental strength
- Emotional fulfilment
- Development of good qualities
- Removal of bad qualities
- Removal of hindrances

**Mental strength:** It requires a lot of effort to remove the impurities from our mind like anger, fear, jealousy etc. It is not easy to change one's character. During this process, one fails several times, and devotion helps cross over this stage without mental fatigue. Having faith in God gives one the strength to change his mind and character and progress spiritually.

**Emotional fulfilment:** One's intelligence alone is not enough to learn the scriptures and attain knowledge from them. One must have emotional maturity also. His mind should have attained adequate growth. The scriptures say that one must have some sense of completeness to attain the Absolute. The lack in certain areas, especially emotional unfulfillment, manifests as a hindrance to one's spiritual growth.

According to the scriptures, it is possible to grasp the scripture only for those who have experienced the love from their mother, father and teacher (*guru*). The lack of emotional fulfilment in the mind will hinder one's understanding of the scriptures. However, most of us are not born in such ideal circumstances. We may experience a lack of emotional fulfilment in one or the other areas. In such cases, devotion completes one. Therefore, in Hinduism, there are many forms of Gods. One can show love towards God like he would for his father or mother or a child or in any other form. This helps one display affection towards their chosen God and attain a sense of emotional fulfilment.

As long as there are cravings within a person, he will not attain emotional maturity and intellectual growth enough to understand the scriptures. This lack can be compensated through devotion alone. Therefore, the attitude with which different people express devotion is different. Though *Brahman* is formless, It is represented in many forms of

expression.

**Development of good qualities:** When one attains fame, power or wealth suddenly, he develops pride with it. But out of devotion, if he takes his blessings as God's grace, he will not be taken over by pride.

**Removes bad qualities:** If one is devoted to God, he will fear unrighteousness. He will, therefore, not develop bad qualities.

**Removes hindrance:** As a rule, all actions have consequences. It is the nature of action to always produce results. We experience various situations because of our *prarabdha karma*. There are two kinds of *Prarabdha karma*, the strong *prarabdha* and the weak. One must go through the strong *prarabdha* at any cost. There is no way one can escape it. Some *prarabdha karma*, however, can be compensated by doing some meritorious work. Such actions are called *prayaschitta karma* (compensatory actions). By doing good actions, merits are created, and they compensate for one's sins and therefore help one overcome his *prarabdha karma*. With devotion, good deeds like prayer add merits to the doer and remove some hindrances on his path.

**How can we know if the *prarabdha karma* can be removed or not?**

We cannot know if the *prarabdha karma* can be removed or not. We can only make efforts to remove the hindrances from our way with good deeds. Therefore, we must make the to remove the hindrances. And even after that, if they are not removed, we must accept them as no one can know which of the hindrances are strong and which are weak.

Prayers are actions that lead to consequences. Devotion leads to good actions like prayer and sacrifices, which generate merits for one. Devotion changes those circumstances that can be changed and gives one strength to bear the ones that cannot be.

#### Benefits of devotion

1. Mental strength
2. Emotional fulfilment
3. Development of good qualities
4. Removes bad qualities
5. Removes hindrances



## Part II

# Arjuna's Questions

In the previous chapter, Lord Krishna talked about *vishwaroopa* and concluded the chapter by telling him, "My devotees attain Me". Arjuna asks Lord Krishna what kind of devotion is superior — the worship of *Ishvara* with forms or the worship of the formless *Brahman*.

He asks who is superior, the *Saguna Brahman* devotee or the *Nirguna Brahman* devotee. *Saguna* is the worship of the forms of Gods. *Nirguna* is the worship of the attributeless *Brahman*. His question is which devotee attains the ultimate human goal — liberation.

The question Arjuna asks, however, is incorrect, for they are not two independent choices that lead to the same destination. The two devotions are two stages to the final goal. The first stage, which is devotion to *Ishvara*, leads to the path of devotion to the formless *Brahman*. Both paths are important and have their own significance in one's spiritual development and cannot be compared or skipped.

## Verses 1

Arjuna said,

*Of those devotees who are engaged in worshipping Your personal form and those who worship the formless Brahman, who do you consider has perfected yoga to attain the Absolute? 12.1*

In reply to Arjuna, Lord Krishna says,

- *Saguna* devotees are superior.
- *Nirguna* devotees attain Me.

What Lord Krishna emphasises here is that through *saguna* devotion, one comes to *nirguna* devotion. He wants Arjuna to take up the worship of forms, to begin with. He says one must not leave *saguna* worship (worship of forms) but also should not stop there. One must go further to worship the formless *Brahman* to attain *Brahman*. *Saguna* worship gives one the qualification for *nirguna* worship. However, only through *nirguna* worship can one attain *Brahman*.

### Stages of devotion

Lord Krishna details the stages of devotion, starting from the highest.

### The fifth stage of devotion — *nirguna* devotion

Those yearning for liberation (*mumukshu*) are said to be the *nirguna* devotees. The knowledge of *Para Brahman* is attained from the Upanishads through *jnana yoga* (yoga of knowledge). The three components of *jnana yoga* are:

1. *Sravana*: listening to the teacher until one understands.

2. *Manana*: contemplating what was thought until one has a clear understanding of it and removing doubts in the process.
3. *Nididhyasana*: meditation. One should meditate until the knower and the known become the same.

Those who listen about *Nirguna Brahman* (attributeless *Brahman*) and meditate on It are *nirguna* devotees. The knowledge from the Upanishads is supposed to be attained only through listening to them. Reading will not give the same level of knowledge that listening to a *guru* does.

*Manana* is important to remove doubts and conflicts from our previous assumptions, for example, our ego and identification with the body. With the newly attained knowledge, we must contemplate that knowledge (perform *nididhyasana*).

The one involved in these activities to know *Nirguna Brahman* is a *nirguna* devotee. A *jnana yogi* is a *nirguna* devotee. The *yogi* must have the qualifications for *jnana yoga* which are: the desire to attain *Brahman*, dispassion, discrimination, and control of the mind and senses.

*Saguna* devotion is important because it gets the devotees ready for *nirguna* devotion. As a result of *saguna* devotion, devotees attain the qualifications for *jnana yoga*. One must attain mental strength and yearning for the knowledge of *Brahman* to be able to come to *nirguna* devotion. *Saguna* devotion prepares one with these qualities. *Saguna* devotion is therefore considered superior, but one cannot attain *Brahman* only through that.

### *Saguna* devotion

There are four stages of *saguna* devotion (they are discussed in detail later in this chapter). The fruit of each stage of devotion is that it leads to the next stage of devotion. The fourth and final step of *saguna* devotion is *vishwaroopa*.

A *vishwaroopa* devotee knows *Ishvara* is the material cause of the world, so the devotee sees the world as God. When one attains *vishwaroopa* devotion, he no longer needs to do *saguna* worship. He is ready to move to *nirguna* devotion.

When Lord Krishna says the *saguna* devotee is superior, he refers to the devotee in the final stage of *saguna* devotion – the *vishwaroopa* stage. He further describes these devotees with three characteristics:

- The *vishwaroopa* devotees have fixed their minds on Him.
- They are always devoted to Him without change.
- They have complete faith in Him.

### *Nirguna Brahman*

Lord Krishna defines *Nirguna Brahman* with these eight characteristics:

1. Indestructible: There is nothing inside or outside of *Brahman*; therefore, *Brahman* is indestructible.
2. Beyond definition: *Brahman* cannot be explained or defined by words. The *Nirguna Brahman* is without any attributes or *guna* and, therefore, cannot be explained.
3. Unmanifest: *Brahman* is in the state of unmanifest.
4. Unthinkable: Whatever is unmanifest cannot be perceived by the senses and, therefore, cannot be thought by the mind.
5. Unchanging: *Brahman* is the unchanging witness of this changing world.
6. All-pervading: *Brahman* is the all-pervading, omnipresent. *Brahman* is the material cause of all there is and, therefore, is present everywhere.

7. Unmoving: *Brahman* is formless and all-pervading. There should be a place outside oneself to be able to move. There is nothing outside or beyond *Brahman*. *Brahman* is unmoving.
8. Eternal: *Brahman* is the unchanging eternal.

A *nirguna* devotee is one who meditates and tries to understand the attribute-less *Brahman*.

### The characteristics of *nirguna* devotees

Lord Krishna describes the *nirguna* devotee's characteristics. Only those people who have the following characteristics can become *nirguna* devotees and succeed in their devotion:

**Control of the senses:** Control of the senses (*dama*) and the mind (*sama*) has been emphasized several times throughout the Gita. Lord Krishna says only through the control of the senses can one attain *Brahman*. The senses must serve as an instrument to one. One must control his senses and not be controlled by them. Each sense organ has its own aversion and attachments. If they are left their way without subjugating, they will drag one based on their attraction and aversion and will no longer be instruments. Subjugating the senses is a slow process but a very important one. The five sense organs and five action organs must be subjugated.

**Equipoise:** Being undisturbed under all circumstances, with different people and all experiences, is being equipoised. Equipoise is the state of being of *nirguna* devotees because they know the root cause of everything is *Ishvara* (the material cause of all creation is *Ishvara*), and they renounce forms because of their knowledge.

**Rejoice in the well-being of others:** Those who can rejoice in others' joy are more evolved. Their consciousness has expanded to all beings, and they cannot harm others. They are non-violent to all.

The devotees with these characters attain *Brahman* as a result of their *nirguna* devotion.

### *Nirguna* devotion is difficult

Lord Krishna says *nirguna* devotion is very difficult. Contemplating the formless, attributeless *Brahman* is very hard as we have *abhimana* (pride) in our bodies which is gross. The object of contemplation in *nirguna* devotion, however, is subtle. Our senses and mind cannot understand the subtle nature of *Brahman*, and so it is hard to grasp.

To understand the *Nirguna Brahman*, one must move from gross to subtle. One must take out one's identity from the body. The scriptures talk about the five sheaths. The physical body is the fifth and the outermost sheath. From the physical body, we must move our identity through the inner sheaths to the innermost Self.

### Sheath (*kosha*)

*Kosha* means sheath. According to the Vedic philosophy, the sheaths cover the Self (*Atma*). There are five sheaths that are layered like onions, covering the Self. They are physical, subtle and causal layers. The five sheaths are:

1. The physical body (*Annamaya kosha*)
2. The energy body (*Pranamaya kosha*)
3. The mental body (*Manomaya kosha*)
4. The wisdom body (*Vijnanamaya kosha*)
5. The bliss body (*Anandamaya kosha*)

### The physical body — The food sheath (*Annamaya kosha*)

This is the physical body and the grossest of all sheaths. *Anna* means 'food'. As the physical body is made from food, it is called the food sheath. As this is the only visible sheath, most identify themselves as the physical body. Birth and death are the attributes



of this sheath. Identifying with the food sheath, we say, "I am tall, I am thin," etc.

The next four sheaths are subtle and are not tangible.

### The energy body (*Pranamaya kosha*)

*Pranamaya* means composed of *prana* — the life force that vitalises the mind and the body. It pervades and interpenetrates the physical body. One of its physical manifestations is breathing. The energy of this sheath greatly influences the state of mind, which is the next sheath. Identifying with the energy sheath, we say, "I am hungry", etc.

### The mental body (*Manomaya kosha*)

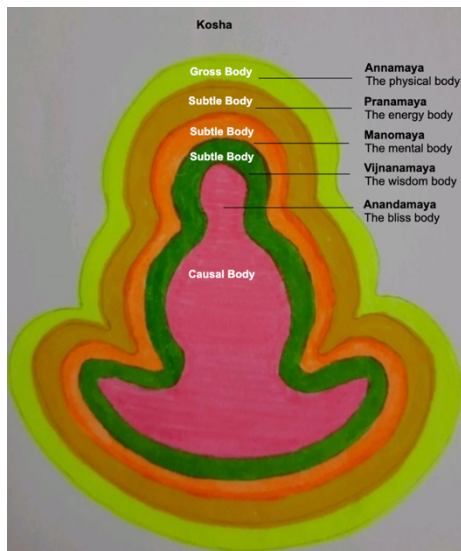
*Manas* means mind. This sheath consists of the mind and its five sensory organs. It is the sheath of one's thoughts and emotions and *samskaras* (mental imprints). Identifying with the mental sheath, we say, "I am angry, I am happy," etc.

### The wisdom body (*Vijnanamaya kosha*)

*Vijnana* means intellect, the faculty which discriminates and determines. This sheath consists of knowledge, intuition, and perception. Being subtler, it pervades and controls the other three sheaths (the physical, energy, and mental sheaths). The wisdom sheath should not be confused with the Self (*Atma*) as this sheath is subject to change and is not always present. It is insentient and limited. This reflects the '*cir*' of the Self and is made of *maya*. The sheath of wisdom identifies itself with the body and mind. The wisdom sheath ignorant of the Self says, "I am the doer".

### The bliss body (*Anandamaya kosha*)

*Ananda* means bliss. It is the innermost and subtlest of the five sheaths. It is also known as the causal body — the core of our existence. During deep sleep, one experiences the causal body when the mind and senses stop functioning. There is absolute peace and bliss in this sheath as the consciousness has expanded far beyond the limits of the physical body. Though endowed with the bliss of the Self, the bliss body is still established in ignorance. It is still ignorant about the nature of the world and the Self. In deep sleep, when one experiences only the causal body, all the dualities, the ego, the thoughts and memories are not perceived. They are not destroyed also, as they come into play when one comes out of this state. The experience can be compared to darkness, where all distinctions and characteristics are merged into it. With light, all distinctions and characteristics come back into existence.



These five sheaths cover the Self and conceal It. They are all formed by the combinations of the five elements. Having come out of the five elements, they have a birth and a death. The sheaths are different from the Self.

*Abhimana* can be translated as pride, vanity, or identification. Where our *abhimana* is kept is where we experience happiness. The mind dwells in the organs and body as 'I am' with *abhimana*. The identity should be moved from the physical body to the Self to experience the constant bliss — our real state of being.

## Verses 2 – 5

Lord Krishna said,

*Those who fix their minds on Me and always worship Me with supreme faith, I consider them to be perfect in *yoga*.* 12.2

*However, those who worship the formless Absolute — the Imperishable, the Indefinable, the Unmanifest, All-Pervading, Inconceivable, the Unchangeable, the Immovable and the Eternal, by restraining all their senses, by being even-minded and rejoicing in the welfare of all beings, they attain Me. 12.3 -12.4*

*Greater are the tribulations for those whose minds are set on the Unmanifest, as the path to attain the impersonal **Brahman** is very hard for the embodied. 12.5*



## Part III

# Saguna Devotion

Lord Krishna suggests *saguna* devotion to those who cannot perform *nirguna* devotion. He asks them to perform the highest form of *saguna* devotion — *vishwaroopa* devotion which is seeing everything as *Ishvara*. For those who cannot see the world as just a form, Lord Krishna asks them to see the world (all forms) as God.

### The fourth stage of devotion (*vishwaroopa* devotion)

Lord Krishna defines the characteristics of *vishwaroopa* devotee:

- They offer all actions to God: Lord Krishna says the devotee performs all actions as a sacrifice to Him. They perform their duties and do not expect the results from them. They show devotion through every action they perform. For them, work is worship.
- They regard *Ishvara* as their supreme goal. These devotees have no higher goal than attaining *Ishvara*. They do not indulge in material pursuits.
- They meditate on *Ishvara* with undivided devotion.
- Their minds are fixed on *Ishvara*.

Lord Krishna says He will lift such devotees from the ocean of *samsara* soon. He says He leads these devotees to the next stage of devotion — the *nirguna* devotion by which they attain liberation. Lord Krishna asks Arjuna to be a *vishwaroopa* devotee if he cannot be a *nirguna* devotee. He tells Arjuna to keep his mind and intellect on Him.

The mind and intellect are not always fixed on the same things. Though the intellect discriminates and decides what is best for one, the mind does not always follow the intellect, as the mind has its own aversion and attraction. Both the intellect and the mind have their flaws. Attraction and aversion to the sense objects are the flaws of the mind, and delusion is the flaw of the intellect. Dispassion removes attraction and aversion. Discrimination removes delusion. By building dispassion and discrimination, one can remove the flaws of the mind and the intellect and thereby understand the goal of life clearly.

Knowledge about *Ishvara* is necessary to perform the highest *saguna* devotion — *vishwaroopa* devotion.

## Verses 8

Lord Krishna said,

*Fix your mind on Me always and place your intellect on Me; you will then verily reside in Me without a doubt.* 12.8

Lord Krishna suggests *abhyasa yoga* for those unable to perform *vishwaroopa* devotion.

### Abhyasa yoga

*Abhyasa* means practising or repeating something. *Abhyasa yoga* is regularly

practising the same thing over and over again, e.g., *Japa*. During *japa*, one must focus his attention and repeat the name of the chosen God. This way, one controls his thoughts during the entire period of *japa*.

Though this is a lower devotion than that of *vishwaroopa* devotion, Lord Krishna suggests the *abhyasa yoga* to those who have not evolved enough for *vishwaroopa* devotion.

**Why can't one be a *vishwaroopa* devotee?**

- Knowledge of *Ishvara*: Most people worship without any knowledge about God. Without knowing that God is the material cause of everything, one cannot be a *vishwaroopa* devotee.
- Attachment and aversion in mind: Though some people may have complete knowledge of *Ishvara*, their minds are full of attraction and aversion. With a flawed mind, one cannot see everything as *Ishvara*.

**The third stage of devotion (*abhyasa yoga*)**

The devotees who do not have knowledge about *Ishvara* or who have attraction and aversion in their minds can take up a particular name and form and worship God through that name and form. These devotees attribute certain characteristics to their God without knowing that *Ishvara* (the name and the form) is the all-pervading God. This is very common in society, and most devotees are in this stage of worship.

Because these devotees cannot stay in devotion the entire time like the *vishwaroopa* devotees, they choose a particular time and place, and perform certain actions to show their devotion. They read about their Gods, recite the name of the Gods or take up austerities like fasting and other penances to show their devotion. By being in this stage of devotion, they will eventually progress to *vishwaroopa* devotion. And only after progressing to *vishwaroopa* devotion must one sacrifice the devotion with the name and form. However, if one cannot do even this kind of worship, he can choose the lower level of devotion — the second level of devotion.

The next two levels — the first and the second level of devotion, are broadly referred to as *karma yoga* as they involve action. The second level is said to be the highest form of *karma yoga*, and the first stage is the beginning level of *karma yoga*.

**The second stage of devotion (the highest form of *karma yoga*)**

**Why can't one be an *abhyasa yogi*?**

One must have predominant *sattva guna* to be an *abhyasa yogi*. For those with predominant *rajas guna*, it is very hard to be involved in *abhyasa yoga* or *japa* or chant for hours.

The devotees in the second stage are those who have a predominant *rajas guna* but do not have too many material desires. They have overcome many qualities like greed, attachment, aversion, and indulgence and have attained some level of mental purity. However, they cannot be without action also, so they cannot perform *japa* or other kinds of *abhyasa* (practices).

The desires in mind lead to actions that align to fulfil the desires. If one does not have any desires or indulgence, he will not be interested in *karma* (actions to fulfil desires). The second stage devotees are those who do not have desires to fulfil through actions, nor do they have qualities for *abhyasa yoga*. Therefore, they work without expecting any returns. They aim to be of service through work. They work purely for the benefit of others without expecting any rewards for their actions. They have sacrificed the rewards of their actions.

**The first stage of devotion (the lower form of *karma yoga*)**

For some, it is not possible to be in the second stage also as they have a lot of desires. Even if they may know that their desires are insatiable, they cannot get rid of them. These people do not have dispassion yet but may desire to attain dispassion. They don't

put forth efforts in achieving dispassion.

They are indulgent and like to experience all the material well-being there is. Lord Krishna recommends these people to be in action and righteously fulfil their desires. Those with desires cannot work without returns. They work so they fulfil their desires. As long as they fulfil their desires righteously, they are still on the right path. Some may not even work to fulfil their desires as they are in *tamas guna*. Compared to that, working to fulfil one's desire is a step forward. The fruits they attain are:

- They attain what they desire.
- They attain purity of mind eventually. Though they may not aim for this, it comes as a fruit of their righteous living.

Those who regard creating wealth or material well-being to be their goal in their life will eventually realize that they do not bring them fulfilment, either after attaining their desires or later in life. It is a big revelation to understand this already. This is essentially purity of mind. Many people do not even come to this point.

Even by just performing work to fulfil one's desire, one attains purity of mind eventually by performing it righteously. If one fulfils their desires through unrighteous ways, they will only get the first fruit of their action — they attain what they desire. Those on the unrighteous path will not attain the purity of mind but instead only accumulate sins. They will not even get the desire to renounce.

Lord Krishna says the ones on the path of fulfilling their desires may enjoy the fruits of their actions but must first offer them to Him. It is common in Hindu tradition to offer all the indulgences like food and clothing during festivals and celebrations to the Gods first and enjoy them as their grace (*prasada*) — such practices of offering first and indulging later will eventually remove very lowly indulgence from one.

Those who accumulate wealth or objects through unrighteous means will not be able to offer them first. Their guilt will not allow for it. If one is on the unrighteous path, he will disconnect from God sooner or later.

#### Stages of devotion

##### Nirguna devotion

The fifth stage of devotion

##### Saguna devotion

The fourth stage of devotion — vishwaroopa devotion

The third stage of devotion — abhyasa yoga

The second stage of devotion — the highest form of karma yoga

The first stage of devotion — the lower form of karma yoga

## Verses 9 – 11

Lord Krishna said,

*If you are unable to fix your mind steadily on Me, then try to attain Me with the *yoga* of constant practice. 12.9*

***If you cannot do the **yoga** of constant practice, then offer all your actions to Me. By performing all actions for Me, you will attain perfection. 12.10***

***If you are unable to do even this, take refuge in Me, control the mind and perform all actions renouncing the results. 12.11***

Lord Krishna encourages the devotees in the first level, for even though they are in the lowest level of devotion, they are righteous and honest. They are on the right path.

Lord Krishna emphasises that one must stay in the most suitable level of devotion for which he qualifies rather than deluding oneself into following the higher level of devotion which he does not qualify for. He says better is knowledge than practices that are accompanied by ignorance. Better is meditation with knowledge than mere knowledge. And better than meditation without the qualifications is being in action and renouncing the fruits of it. Abandoning the fruits of action is mentioned as superior for an ignorant person, for he is unable to follow any other path of devotion.

Those without qualifications will not attain any results from just being in the higher stage of devotion. It is more appropriate to be in the lower stage of devotion if one qualifies for that than practising the higher stages. By being in the right stage of devotion, one will qualify for the next stage soon. The five stages of devotion are the essential steps. The first step leads to the next, and so on. The fifth step leads one to liberation.

## Verses 12

Lord Krishna said,

***Better is knowledge than practice; better than knowledge is meditation. Better than meditation is the renunciation of the fruits of action; verily, by such renunciation, one attains immediate peace. 12.12***

With these discourses, Lord Krishna has answered Arjuna's question. Out of compassion for Arjuna, Lord Krishna speaks to him about the wise, the characteristics of the one who has attained liberation through knowledge.

The characteristics of the wise described are his innate nature. The liberated have attained the perfection of character through years of penance. Lord Krishna mentions these qualities to inspire others to attain them. A spiritual aspirant must constantly practice these characteristics to attain them.





## Part IV

# The Characteristics of the Wise

Those who have crossed all the five stages of devotion are called *jivanmukti* (liberated while alive). They may have started their spiritual practices many lifetimes ago and have finally crossed over all the stages in this lifetime. Through the course of their practices, they must have taken up several penances and have perfected their minds. The minds of the wise and their nature are analysed for the reasons below:

- Even many learned have confusion about the characteristics of the wise. Many assume various traits of the wise, which are not really their nature. It is important to clarify this confusion among all.
- To inspire the spiritual student by showing them the state of mind they attain with practice.
- To show the aspirants their goals. The nature of the liberated must be goals for the students.
- To compare ourselves to these people and know our maturity level and strive for better.

What we see as the characteristics of the liberated is the result of their hard work and self-control over many lifetimes. Therefore, we must not feel demotivated by them. Also, we must not compare other people with the wise and find faults in them. It must be used only as a reference for our own growth.

### The characteristics of the wise

**Free from hatred towards all beings:** The liberated are free from hatred towards all beings. When we are attached to someone, we have emotions like love, anger or hatred. If someone hurts us, we build hatred towards them. The wise do not have attachment or aversion within them to hate anyone. Nor do they associate themselves with their ego. The wise see everyone in themselves and, therefore, do not have hatred towards anyone, irrespective of their deeds.

**Friendly with all:** The liberated are friendly with all. Because of their wisdom, they are not attached to anybody but are friendly. Attachment makes one dependent on the other but being friendly is not being dependent on others.

**Compassionate to the distressed:** It may seem that the liberated are indifferent to all as they do not have attachment or aversion towards anything or anyone. However, the liberated are full of compassion for all, especially the distressed. After liberation, the wise work entirely out of compassion for others. They write and teach out of empathy and love for others without expecting anything in return.

**Free from attachment and ego:** *Ahankara* means ego or "I" ness, and *mamakaram* means "mine-ness"(ownership). When one's ego 'I' ness is in the body, then one has 'mine-ness' to all the objects related to the body. *Ahankara* is the reason for *mamakaram*. When one attains freedom from ownership, there is no fear or anger or other emotions of *samsara*.

Removing the 'mine-ness' out of the object does not mean not using the objects. It means the awareness one has about the object has changed. One's attitude when an object perishes shows his level of attachment or 'mine-ness' towards it. The 'mine-ness'

cannot be seen. It is an internal change.

The 'I-ness' leads to 'mine-ness', which leads to attachment and aversion. When the 'I-ness' leaves, the 'mine-ness' leaves, and so do the attachment and aversion.

**Equipoised in the pairs of the opposite:** The wise remain unaffected by their circumstances. They treat both sorrow and joy alike. The wise know that the reason for taking up a body is because of *karma*. One's sins manifest as difficult situations, and the merits bring comfort. Life is a mixture of joy and suffering, and they cannot be avoided. Our suffering is because of trying to avoid unfavourable circumstances and our deep longing for comfortable circumstances. The wise accept every circumstance.

**Always Forgiving:** The wise understand that people make mistakes when they do not have the power to refrain from them. The wise see the root cause of the mistakes, and so they pity the sinner. Just like we are compassionate for physically sick people, sinning is the outcome of mental illnesses, and we must also be compassionate towards them. Those who hurt or insult others are mentally unwell.

**Always contented:** Having achieved the highest goal, the wise are always content. Their consciousness is on the Soul and the Soul is complete. They do not long for anything. Liberation is attaining contentment. The liberated are content because of achieving the highest. A spiritual aspirant, however, should not be content in his effort before achieving liberation. Some are content and do not want anything out of *tamas guna*. This is not real contentment and is the result of dullness.

The content mind will not stop one from actions that come out of *sattva guna*. When the contented mindset stops one from actions, then the contentment is out of *tamas guna* and not *sattva guna*.

**Always a *yogi*:** *Yogi*, in this context, means the one who has control over his thoughts and mind. The mind of the wise is an instrument. Having performed *yoga* and other practices, they have gotten their mind under control. After perfecting their minds, they do not continue *yoga* to attain other superpowers. Their aim is only to attain mental purity and not superpowers.

**Conquered his own nature:** The wise have conquered their own nature. One's nature is formed from several births through *samskaras* (mental imprints) and *vasanas* (tendencies). They have won over their nature by removing all the detrimental habits that do not aid in their spiritual progress.

**Firm in conviction:** They are firm in conviction about themselves being the Soul. They will not slip back into non-soul.

**Fixed the mind and intellect on *Ishvara*:** Both their mind and intellect are firmly fixed on *Ishvara* without wavering.

Lord Krishna says these devotees are indeed very special to Him.

### The characteristics of the wise

Free from hatred towards all beings  
Friendly with all  
Compassionate to the distressed  
Free from attachment and ego  
Equipoised in the pairs of the opposite  
Always Forgiving  
Always contented  
Always a yogi  
Conquered his own nature  
Firm in conviction  
Fixed the mind and intellect on Ishvara

## Verses 13 – 14

Lord Krishna said,

*These devotees who are free from hatred, friendly and compassionate to all, free from attachment and ego, equipoised in sorrow and joy, forgiving, ever content, steady in meditation, firm in conviction, self-controlled, with the mind and intellect dedicated to Me are indeed very dear to Me. 12.13-12.14*

Lord Krishna says the world does not suffer because of the wise, nor does the wise suffer because of the world. The mind of the liberated is both soft and tough. Those who are not the cause of suffering for others will also not suffer because of others. This is the law of giving. We receive what we give. The wise do not cause any suffering for others, hence will not suffer either.

### Lord Krishna describes more characteristics of the wise

1. The wise are never elated. Nothing in this world will give them so much joy to be elated.
2. They are not envious of others' progress or intolerant of others' weaknesses.
3. They are free from all kinds of fear. They are not attached to anything and thus do not experience fear. They neither fear sorrow nor death. Many people fear sorrow and pain. The wise know that one will experience only as much pain as he can bear. Even the physical body will not bear pain beyond what it cannot.
4. They do not grieve over any situation. Anything unexpected or disorderly does not upset them.
5. The liberated are not dependent on anyone or anything. For him, even his body is a luxury. It is not a need for him to be dependent on it. He does not worry about losing anything. The independence he has attained is the result of his knowledge and not an effort for him.
6. Purity: The wise are clean internally and externally. Knowledge is the highest of all purifiers. His mind is purified because of the knowledge attained.

7. Capable: Many assume that the path of asceticism is taken up by those who are not capable of leading any other lifestyles. This is not correct. One must be capable of being on this path and succeeding. Also, because the liberated have renounced, many think they will not do any work. The liberated are not in *tamas guna* (dullness). Therefore, they do a lot of work out of *sattva guna*, mainly for the welfare of others. Even though they don't have to work, they teach and write purely out of compassion for the others on this path.
8. They are impartial to all. They do not have attachment or aversion and are impartial to situations and people.
9. They are equipoised in all situations.
10. Renounced all undertakings: They do not undertake planned actions for any personal motives like fame or wealth. The liberated work to serve others.

## Verses 15 – 16

Lord Krishna said,

***Those by whom the world is not disturbed and those who are not disturbed by the world, those free from elation, anger, envy, fear, and grief — they are dear to Me. 12.15***

***Those without expectation, externally and internally pure, capable, unconcerned, untroubled, those who have renounced all undertakings, such devotees are very dear to Me. 12.16***

Lord Krishna discusses in detail a very important characteristic of the liberated. Though it has been mentioned several times, Lord Krishna restates it to emphasize its importance. He says the wise remains the same in all situations. The world appears dual in nature. There are dualities like birth and death, darkness and light, and sorrow and happiness. The liberated, however, treat them alike.

1. They do not sink in joy or sorrow.
2. They have renounced the good and bad of their actions. Their actions do not bring them merits or demerits as they are performed without any motives.
3. The wise are the same towards enemies and friends. Though they may not treat anyone as their enemy or friend, they are the same even to those who see them as enemies or friends.
4. They treat both censure and praise alike.
5. They are the same in honour and in dishonour.
6. They take both pleasure and pain similarly.
7. They are free from attachments and unfavourable associations.
8. They are the same in hot and cold.
9. They are not attached to a place of residence. Those who have taken up *sannyasa* (asceticism) do not have any possessions, including a house.
10. They are content with whatever comes their way.

## Verses 17 – 20

Lord Krishna said,

***Those who neither rejoice nor hate, nor grieve, nor desire, and have renounced both good and bad deeds. Such devotees are dear to Me. 12.17***

***Those who are equal to friends and foes, are same in honour and dishonour, in cold and heat, in happiness and sorrow, who are impartial and free from***

*attachment, those who are same in censure and praise, those who are contemplative and content with anything they get, they who have no fixed abode, steadfast in mind, full of devotion, these devotees are dear to Me. 12.18-12.19*

Lord Krishna concludes this chapter by saying,

*Those who with faith follow this nectar of a path — the path of righteousness, devoted to Me and holding Me as their supreme goal are very dear to Me. 12.20*



**Aum Tat Sat**

# Summary

## Part I — Introduction

- Devotion is hard to define as devotion is expressed in different ways by different people.
- General characteristics of devotion are affection towards *Ishvara* (God), belief in the existence of *Ishvara*, complete faith in *Ishvara*, and surrendering to only *Ishvara* and not to any other material aspects of the world.
- Knowledge is the root cause of devotion.
- Types of devotees: the distressed, the pleasure seekers, the knowledge seekers, and the wise.
- Devotion can be further classified as: devotion with desire (*Sakama Bhakti*), devotion without desire (*Nishkama Bhakti*)
- Two divisions of devotion: devotion to *Ishvara* (*Saguna Bhakti*), devotion to formless *Brahman* (*Nirguna Bhakti*)
- Benefits of devotion: mental strength, emotional fulfilment, development of good qualities, removal of bad qualities, removal of hindrances.

## Part II — Arjuna's Questions

- Arjuna asks Lord Krishna who is superior, the *Saguna Brahman* devotee or *Nirguna Brahman* devotee.
- The question Arjuna asks, however, is incorrect, for they are not independent choices that lead to the same destination. The two devotions are essentially two stages to the final goal.
- In reply to Arjuna, Lord Krishna says, *saguna* devotees are superior, and *nirguna* devotees attain Me.
- The fifth stage of devotion — *nirguna* devotion: Those who listen about the *Nirguna Brahman* (attribute-less *Brahman*) and meditate on It are *nirguna* devotees. A *jnana yogi* is a *nirguna* devotee.
- *Saguna* devotion: There are four stages of *saguna* devotion.
- The characteristics of *Nirguna Brahman*: Indestructible, Beyond definition, Unmanifest, Unthinkable, Unchanging, All-pervading, Unmoving, Eternal
- The characteristics of a *nirguna* devotee: control of the senses, equipoises, rejoicing in the well-being of others.
- Contemplating the formless, attributeless *Brahman* is very hard as we have *abhimana* (pride) in our bodies which is gross. The object of contemplation in *nirguna* devotion is subtle.
- *Kosha* means sheath. According to the Vedic philosophy, the sheaths cover the Self (*Atma*).
- The five sheaths are layered like onions, covering the Self. They are physical, subtle and causal layers.
- The five sheaths are: the physical body (*Annamaya kosha*), the energy body (*Pranamaya kosha*), the mental body (*Manomaya kosha*), the wisdom body (*Vijnanamaya kosha*), the bliss body (*Anandamaya kosha*)

## Part III — *Saguna* Devotion

- Lord Krishna suggests *saguna* devotion to those who cannot perform *nirguna* devotion. He suggests the highest form of *saguna* devotion which is *vishwaroopa* devotion — seeing everything as *Ishvara*. For those who cannot see the world as just a form, Lord Krishna asks them to see the world (all the forms) as God.
- The fourth stage of devotion (*vishwaroopa* devotion)



- The *vishwaroopa* devotee offers all actions to God. They regard *Ishvara* as their supreme goal.
- Knowledge about *Ishvara* is important to be able to perform the highest *saguna* devotion — *vishwaroopa* devotion.
- Lord Krishna says He will lift such devotees from the ocean of *samsara* soon. He leads these devotees to the next stage of devotion — the *nirguna* devotion through which they attain liberation.
- The third stage of devotion (*abhyasa yoga*): The devotees who do not have knowledge about *Ishvara* or who have attraction and aversion in their minds can take up a particular name and form and worship God through that name and form.
- The second stage of devotion (the highest form of *karma yoga*): The second stage devotees are those who do not have desires to fulfil through actions, nor do they have qualities for *abhyasa yoga*. Therefore, they work without expecting any returns. They aim to be of service through work.
- The first stage (the lower form of *karma yoga*): For some, it is not possible to be in the second stage also as they have a lot of desires. As long as one fulfils their desires righteously, they are still on the right path. These devotees attain what they desire and attain purity of mind eventually.
- Lord Krishna encourages the devotees in the first level, for even though they are in the lowest level of devotion, they are righteous and honest.
- Lord Krishna emphasizes that one must stay in the most suitable level of devotion for which one qualifies rather than deluding oneself into following the higher level of devotion which he does not qualify for.
- Those without qualifications will not attain any results from just being in the higher level.
- The five stages of devotion are essential steps. The first step leads to the next, and so on. The fifth step leads one to liberation.

#### Part IV — The Characteristics of the Wise

- The ones who have crossed all the five stages of devotion are said to be *jivanmukti* (liberated while alive). They may have started their spiritual practices many lifetimes ago and have finally crossed over all the stages in this lifetime.
- The wise are free from hatred towards all beings, friendly with all, compassionate to the distressed, free from attachment and ego, equipoised in the pairs of the opposite, always forgiving, always contented, always a *yogi*, conquered his own nature, firm in conviction, fixed the mind and intellect on *Ishvara*.
- The wise are never elated, not envious of others' progress or intolerant of others' weaknesses, are free from all kinds of fear and do not grieve over any situation. The liberated are not dependent on anyone or anything. The wise are clean internally and externally, capable, impartial to all, equipoised in all situations, have renounced all undertakings, do not sink in joy or sorrow, and have renounced the good and bad from their actions. The wise are the same towards enemies and friends, treat both the censure and praise alike, are the same in honour and dishonour, take both pleasure and pain, similarly, are free from attachment and unfavourable associations, are the same in hot and cold, they are not attached to a place of residence. And they are content with whatever comes their way.

## Chapter 13

# Kshetra Kshetrajna Vibhaaga Yoga



The third section of the Gita is referred to as *jnana yoga* — the *yoga* of knowledge. The central concept of this chapter is to understand the connection between the individual being and *Ishvara* (God). Any statement that establishes the relationship between the individual being and *Ishvara* (God) is called the *Mahavakya* — The Great Declaration. Lord Krishna further discusses values in this chapter. He details the qualities one must attain and those one must leave. He explains *ParaBrahman* using the method of superimposition and negation as described in the Upanishads. He discusses the concept of *Purusha* and *prakriti* in detail and concludes the chapter by prescribing steps to liberation.



## Part I

# Introduction

*Jnana yoga* (the *yoga* of knowledge) is the direct dedicated effort made to understand the Self. When one performs *karma yoga* (the *yoga* of action) and *bhakti yoga* (the *yoga* of devotion), one attains qualification for *jnana yoga* (the *yoga* of knowledge). In this chapter, *Bhagavan* Krishna explains *Brahman* in the way It is explained in the Upanishads. Ideally, by listening to the scriptures, one must attain wisdom, and yet most don't. Many only understand them as words and do not attain wisdom, mainly because of a lack of purity of the mind and other preparation and efforts.

*Jnana yoga* consists of three components: *Sravana*, *Manana*, and *Nididhyasana*.

***Sravana*:** *Sravana* translates to listening. In the scriptures (the Upanishads), specific methods are used to define *Brahman*. One must listen to the *guru* until one understands the ultimate Truth. Listening to the *guru* is *sravana*.

***Manana*:** *Manana* is contemplating the various ideas based on *sravana*. It must go hand in hand with listening. The scriptures dictate that one is complete, flawless, pure, blissful, indestructible and deathless. However, our personal experience contradicts them. One must contemplate and, with the help of the *guru*, must remove all doubts. Contemplating and removing doubts is *manana*. When one has done both *sravana* and *manana*, he will have a firm understanding of his real Self. However, the old tendencies and mental imprints (the *vasanas* and *samsara*) will not let one attain the knowledge of the Self easily. He may quickly fall back into his old habits. Therefore, *nididhyasana* is required to standstill in the newly attained knowledge.

***Nididhyasana*:** The knowledge that is attained must be assimilated deep within oneself. *Nididhyasana* is the meditation that is performed to establish a union with the knowledge of the Self.

## The Great Declaration

The central concept of the Gita (and of this section) is to understand the relationship between the individual being and *Ishvara* (God). This section discusses details about the individual self and God and declares that they are both one. Any statement which proposes the individual self and *Brahman* as one and non-dual is called a *Mahavakya*.

*Maha* means great, and *vakya* means declarations/ sayings/ statements. *Mahavakya* translates into "The great declaration" or "The great saying". They are called "The great sayings" because the results one gets from understanding these statements are great. *Mahavakyas* declare that there is no difference between the individual self and the Supreme. These statements have at least three words. One word for the individual, one for the *Brahman* and one that describes their unity. Even if there are more words in a *mahavakya* we can categorize them into the above three categories. An example of *mahavakya* is:

*Tat Tvam Asi*

*Tat* means That, refers to the Absolute (*Brahman*). *Tvam* means you, refers to the

individual Self. *Asi* means are. This great statement declares: **You are That.**

A few more examples of *mahavakyas* are:

*Aham Brahmasmi*, which means **I am Brahman.**

*Ayam Atma Brahma*, which means **This Self (Atman) is Brahman.**

The entire Upanishads themselves discuss these three words or concepts — the individual, *Brahman* and their union. The vast, otherwise incomprehensible scriptures are easy to understand if we categorize the discussion into these three concepts. When Lord Krishna talks about good qualities, qualifications, renunciation, and asceticism, He talks about the individual self. When He talks about the creation, *vishwaroopa*, power, glory, and source, Lord Krishna details *Ishvara*.

In the previous chapter, Lord Krishna detailed the characteristics of the liberated. In this chapter, He describes the knowledge the liberated behold.



## Part II

# Arjuna's Questions

## Verses 1

The chapter begins with Arjuna's question about the six terms below. Some versions of the Gita do not have this question, and the chapter begins with Lord Krishna directly answering them.

Arjuna said,

*I wish to know about **Prakriti** (Matter), **Purusha** (Spirit), the **Kshetra** (The Field), the **Kshetrajna** (The Knower of the Field), **Jnana** (the Knowledge) and **Jneyam** (that which is to be known). 13.1*

Lord Krishna's response to Arjuna's question is a **Mahavakya** (the great declaration). The following two verses declare the central concepts of the Upanishads, and the Gita was revealed to communicate this.

### The individual self

According to the Upanishads, our understanding of "I" is not entirely correct. We have added components to "I", which are not "I". It is like calling the entire rice pot as rice. Only what is cooked inside the pot is rice, the pot itself is not the rice. The nature and the properties of rice and pot are very different. The scriptures discuss the individual self to retain the understanding of "I" and remove the association of what "I" is not. We understand "I" as the Soul (**Atma**) along with the non-soul — the body and mind (**anatma**). "I" is, however, only the Soul.

**Bhagavan** Krishna uses the terms **kshetrajna** for Soul (**Atma**) and **kshetra** for non-soul (**anatma**). The concept of **kshetra** and **kshetrajna** is both mixed up. **Kshetra** here is used to refer to our bodies.

### **Kshetra** — The field

#### What is a body?

All three bodies — gross, subtle, and causal are referred to as the body in this context. However, we experience everything (**samsara**) only through the gross and the subtle body. In most cases, one understands "I" as the mind along with the gross body. This understanding is **ahankara** (ego).

#### Why does Lord Krishna call the non-soul **kshetra**?

**Kshetra** means field/ area/ land. Sometimes, **kshetra** is also used to refer to temples and sacred places. Lord Krishna refers to our bodies as **kshetra** for the following reasons:

1. One of the characteristics of **kshetra** is depletion. Our bodies deplete too.
2. **Kshetra** is that which can be destroyed, and so is our body.
3. **Kshetra** is that which protects one from destruction: Our bodies protect us from destruction because only a human body can break the cycle of **samsara** (death and

rebirth). Our minds and bodies are the results of our actions, and we take up bodies to experience *samsara*. And through the body, we can break the *samsara*. For this reason, the scriptures glorify human birth. If we understand our birth's rarity and greatness, we will put it to greater use. Even after taking human birth, if one uses it only as much as animals do, it is a waste of life. Through this body, we can attain something so great that no other beings can.

4. Our bodies are referred to as *kshetra* because a field is where we can sow seeds and grow plants. From the plants (from their seeds), we get more plants and more seeds. It is a cycle, just like the *samsara chakra*. Our body is comparable to the field, and the seeds to the merits and demerits we accumulate. We are born again because of the merits and demerits we collect. The plants resulting from the actions are compared to the joy and sorrow we experience through our bodies. Just like the field keeps the cycle of sowing and reaping, so do our bodies keep us in the *samsara chakra*.

### ***Kshetrajna* — The Knower of the Field**

*Kshetrajna* means the knower of the *kshetra* — the knower of the field. It means the consciousness, which is the knower of the body — the Soul, the *Atman*.

The characteristics of the Soul and the body are different from each other. They are, in fact, opposite to each other. These two distinct concepts are mixed up and understood as one because of *maya* (cosmic delusion). The characteristics of the Soul and the body are:

1. The Soul is referred to as *Drik*. *Drik* means perceiver, the knower. The body is referred to as *drishyam*, which means the seen or the known. The knower — the *drik*, knows all that can be known. The knower is different from the known. For instance, when we see a pot, we know we are "the perceiver" and that the pot is "the perceived". We know pot is external and different from us who see it. If there is an object that can be known, then there should be a knower different from it. If there is an object that can be experienced, then there should be an experiencer different from it.

We can experience our body, our intellect, our mind, and the emotions in it. We know what we know, and we also know what we don't know. This suggests that a knower outside of the intellect knows what the intellect knows and doesn't. The knower who knows he knows (or doesn't know) is different from the known (the knowledge) or the not known (the ignorance). The body, the mind and the intellect can be known and experienced. They are *drishyam*. That which knows is the consciousness — the Soul. All that can be known is different from It. They are all non-soul, *jada swaroopa* — lifeless existence. The consciousness and the lifelessness are different from one another and should not be mixed up as one.

2. Anything that is known is invariably *jada* (lifeless). The Soul is consciousness, and the non-soul is without consciousness. When we see objects, it is clear that they are *jada* (lifeless) and that they do not have consciousness. However, when we see our bodies, we are not convinced that it is *jada*. For instance, the body can feel and experience pain and pleasure. We, therefore, think there is consciousness in the body. The body made of the five primordial elements, which are all *jada*, is also *jada*. The mind made of subtle primordial elements, which is *jada*, is also *jada*.
3. The known is many, while the knower is one, undivided, that shines through all.
4. The known is subject to change. The knower is the unchanging truth.



5. The known is perishable. The knower is non-perishable.
6. The known has attributes. It is *saguna*. It has three *gunas* — *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. The knower is attributeless.
7. The known is called *mithya* (delusion). The knower is *satya* (the truth). The known cannot be declared as non-existent as it is experiential. The known is an experiential reality. The knower is the Absolute reality.

The Soul has its own characteristics, and so does the body. We mix up the two and call it "I". We assume the characteristics of the body as our own, as the body is gross and tangible. We do not take on the characteristics of the Soul as it is subtle to identify with it. We suffer because of this wrong association. The scriptures dictate that we split the Soul from the body and understand ourselves as the Soul.

Kshetra	Kshetrajna
Non-soul	The Soul
The known	The Knower
Lifeless	Consciousness
Many	One
Subject to change	Unchanging
Perishable	Non-perishable
Has attributes	Attribute-less
Delusion	Truth

### *Ishvara* — God

#### Who is *Ishvara*?

*Ishvara* is the reason for the world. All that is manifested is because of *Ishvara*. Like the individual self, *Ishvara* is also split into two features the *Atma* and the *anatma*, the *Drik* and *drishyam*, and the *kshetra* and *Kshetrajna*. The characteristics of the *Ishvara*:

1. The lower and the higher nature: In the previous chapters, Lord Krishna discussed two natures of *Ishvara*: *aparaprakriti* — the lower nature and the *ParaPrakriti* — the higher nature. The lower nature is the reason for the world. The higher nature is the Ultimate Truth, the bliss, and the consciousness — the complete. The lower nature is the component with *maya*, and *maya* is the reason for the manifestations. *Maya* is the reason for the three worlds, which are:
  - a. Causal world (*karana prapancha*)
  - b. Subtle world (*sukshma prapancha*)
  - c. Gross world (*stula prapancha*)

Just like the individual has three bodies (the causal, subtle and gross body), the three worlds are the body of God. The higher nature is unmanifest beyond all three worlds.

2. The lower nature bestows the fruits of actions (*karma phala*). *Brahman* is a non-doer.
3. The lower nature is the knower of all. The higher nature is pure consciousness.

4. The lower nature has attributes — the three *gunas* (*sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*). The higher nature does not have any attributes (*Nirguna*).
5. The lower nature is *mithya* (delusion). The higher is *satya* (the Absolute Truth).

Ishvara	
Lower Nature	Higher Nature
The reason for the world	Ultimate truth, bliss, consciousness
Bestows the fruits of actions	Non-doer
The knower of all	Pure consciousness
Has attributes	Attribute-less
Delusion	Truth

### What is the relationship between *Ishvara* and the individual?

The scriptures draw two relationships between the individual and the *Ishvara*:

1. They define *Ishvara* as the reason (*karana*) and the individual as the cause (*kariya*).
2. They also declare that the individual and *Ishvara* are one and the same.

These statements contradict each other because if the objects are one and the same, there cannot be any relationship between them. However, the two relationships are derived from different grounds. The first statement is derived from the relationship between the lower nature of *Ishvara* and the *anatma* (non-soul) of the individual. The second statement is made by considering the underlying true essence of both. The higher nature of *Ishvara* (*Brahman*) and the Soul (*Atma*) of the individual are the same. *Brahman* did not create *Atman*. *Atman* is *Brahman*. They are the same.

On the basis of *mithya* (delusion), *Ishvara* is the creator, and the individual is his creation. On the basis of the essence (the Ultimate Truth) they both are the same. This can be understood better with the example of the ocean and the waves.

Let's consider the ocean as *Ishvara*, and the waves as the individual selves. The ocean is the reason for the waves, and the waves are the cause. The waves exist because of the ocean. The waves made of water can take up any form or name. The ocean is also water. The forms look different, but on the basis of the essence, they are the same (water).

No object will not have contradictory characteristics at the same time at the same place. For instance, an object cannot be hot and cold at the same time in the same place. However, the individual self is a *samsari* and *Brahman* at the same time.

**How can the individual self have contradictory characteristics at the same time?** The reason for this is one's ignorance. Out of ignorance, the self appears to be a *samsari* when it is *Brahman*. Until we identify ourselves as the body, we cannot see that we are *Brahman*. Once we identify ourselves as the Soul, there is no difference between *Ishvara* and us. Seeing the difference is a necessary step, and even the *Advaita* school of thought accepts the difference between *Ishvara* and the individual, to begin with.

Lord Krishna says that He is the knower in all the bodies that experience *samsara*. He declares that only the knowledge of the *mahavakyas* — the knowledge about *kshetra* and *Kshetrajna* as the real knowledge. Irrespective of one's cultural background,

language, and faith, if one knows he is *Brahman*, he is said to have attained the highest knowledge, for that is the only unchanging truth. Any other knowledge is only considered *mithya jnana*, as the objects about which the knowledge is attained are considered *mithya* (delusion). No amount of such knowledge will ever satisfy one.

#### Ishvara and Jiva

<b>Lower Nature</b>	Ishvara is the reason, jiva is the cause
<b>Higher Nature</b>	Ishvara and the jiva are the same

## Verses 2 – 3

Lord Krishna said,

*This body is called the field — the *kshetra*, and He who knows it is called the Knower of the field — the *Kshetrajna*, by the sages who know of them.* 13.2

*Know Me as the Knower of the field in all fields. I consider only this knowledge — the knowledge of the field and its Knower as true knowledge.* 13.3

### Matter and energy

Lord Krishna used the term *kshetra* to refer to the body. He now extends it to the entire universe. He says *kshetra* is all that is manifested and can be seen. *kshetra* is the inert principle, the lifeless (*jada*) principle. The *Kshetrajna* is the conscious principle. He further explains *kshetra* in detail — its qualities, variations and origin. The lifeless principle, *kshetra*, is said to exist in two states which are:

1. The unmanifest — the *karana avastha* also called the *avyakta avastha*
2. The manifested — the *kariya avastha* also called the *vyakta avastha*

*Kshetra* is the matter and energy. The manifested *kshetra* is the matter, and the unmanifest being the energy. The unmanifest is the reason for the creation, and this energy is called *maya*. *Maya* is the lifeless principle that causes creation. In the vicinity of *Brahman*, *maya*, illuminated by *Brahman's* awareness, brings the entire universe into manifestation. The unmanifest energy (*shakti*) *maya* is *kshetra*, and all that has come out of it is also *kshetra*.

*Shakti* is the primordial cosmic energy that is the reason for creation (and also destruction). The creative energy manifests itself in all forms of matter, and they are said to be the infinite forms of *shakti*. *Shakti* is the feminine aspect of creation and is often personified as Goddesses in Hinduism. *Shakti* is also called *Adi Shakti*, which means "the first energy", or *Adi Parashakti*, "the first Supreme energy". *Shakti* is portrayed as both a benevolent creator (and protector) and an embodiment of destructive aspects like degeneration and death. She has no beginning or end. She is the ever-existing permanence (*nitya*).

## Two states of kshetra



Creation has been explained in many scriptures and in the Gita in the earlier chapters. In short, from the causal state of *maya*, the subtle elements are manifested. From the subtle elements, the gross elements are manifested. The subtle bodies come from the subtle elements, and the gross bodies come from the gross elements.

For an individual, the causal body manifests first, and then it takes up the subtle and the gross body. *Maya* has three attributes — the *gunas* and anything derived from it also has its three *gunas*. *Maya* is lifeless (*jada swaroopa*) and does not have awareness or consciousness independently. It depends on *Brahman* and is illuminated by *Brahman's* consciousness. And so are all the manifestations from *maya*, dependent on *Brahman*. Anything that is manifested is inherently *jada*. The subtle body manifested from *maya* is also *jada* (lifeless). The mind made of the subtle primordial elements (*sukshma pancha bootha*) is also *jada*. The mind and the emotions in mind are all *kshetra* (the field). This is contrary to our experience. Our minds look as though they have a consciousness of their own. *Brahman's* consciousness illuminates the mind. When the illuminated mind identifies with the body, the body acts, which is otherwise dull and lifeless. If the mind withdraws the relationship from the body, the body becomes lifeless (*jada*). This happens during sleep. The body seems lifeless. When the subtle body leaves the gross body during death, the body becomes lifeless (*jada*). Whatever the mind identifies as oneself attains consciousness.

**How does the mind attain consciousness?**

The inherent nature of the subtle body is to reflect the consciousness of *Brahman*. The gross body does not have this power. Whenever the subtle body is created, *Brahman's* consciousness reflects on it. The reflection of the Soul in our intellect is called *chidabhasa*. *Chit* means true awareness, *abhasa* means reflection. Death is when the reflection, along with the subtle body, leaves the gross body. *Chidabhasa* being the reflection, is not permanent. So *chidabhasa* is also a field (*kshetra*). It is important to note that the consciousness — the '*cit*' is not *jada* or *kshetra*, but its reflection on the subtle body is *jada* and *kshetra*. The gross world and the gross bodies, the subtle world and the subtle bodies are all *jada*. So, the gross and subtle manifestations are both field (*kshetra*).

## Verses 4 – 7

Lord Krishna said,

*Hear from Me what the field is and what its nature is, what its changes are, from what it was created, who its Knower is and what His powers are. 13.4*

*The truth about the field and the Knower of the field have been sung by sages in many ways in various Vedic hymns, with their sound logic and conclusive evidence. 13.5*

*The great elements, the ego, intellect, the unmanifested, the ten senses (sense and action organs), the mind, the five objects of the senses, desire, aversion,*

*pleasure, pain, the body, consciousness (the reflection), and will — all these  
comprise the field and its modifications.* 13.6 - 13.7



### Part III

## Values

Further to *kshetra* and *Kshetrajna*, *Bhagavan* Krishna details *jnana*. *Jnana* means knowledge, mainly the knowledge of *Brahman*. In this context, however, under *jnana*, He details the values beholding which one attains the highest knowledge (*Brahman jnana*). Lord Krishna talks about twenty important values one must behold. Only those who keep up these values will be able to attain the knowledge of the Self.

### Why are the values important?

Values are necessary to keep our minds healthy. Certain foods and exercises keep our bodies healthy; similarly, certain emotions and practices keep our minds healthy. Those that destroy oneself and others are bad qualities, and we must remove them. We must make efforts to develop good values and remove bad values. The two main reasons to develop good values are:

1. Values qualify one for the knowledge of Self.
2. Values are necessary to attain contentment, peace, and humanly possible happiness.

### To attain knowledge of anything, the three principles stated below must align:

1. The knower
2. The object of knowledge
3. The instrument through which one attains knowledge.

One cannot attain knowledge if there is a flaw in any of the three principles above. For instance, the eyes are the instruments to attain visual knowledge about an object. If the eyes do not function or if they are not available, then the visual knowledge of an object cannot be attained even if the object and the knower are present without any flaws.

To attain the knowledge of the Self, the knower is one's own mind, the instruments are the scriptures (the teachings), and the object of knowledge is *Brahman*. One may have both the instruments and the object of knowledge, but if the knower has flaws, the knowledge cannot be attained. When the knower's mind has flaws, his *antarkarna* (internal sense organs) is not ready for knowledge. The *antahkarana* must be prepared for the knowledge, which is an arduous task. But once the mind is ready, he gets a *guru* and access to the scriptures. Good values remove flaws from the knower.

### To attain contentment, peace, and humanly possible happiness

Some may have all the qualifications to learn the scriptures, but they may not desire that. By developing good values, they attain great contentment and peace. Having taken human birth, one must also have human qualities to attain superior happiness. If we behave like animals, having taken a human body, we will only attain the joy animals get. Through these values, one attains mental maturity and higher joys.

The twenty values are divided into two groups — the good values one must acquire, and the bad ones must remove.

### How can one develop these values?



We can develop these values with the help of

1. Knowledge and
2. Efforts

**Through knowledge:** Firstly, we must know what the good values are to acquire them and the detrimental ones to remove them. These values, in general, are declared in the scriptures of most religions.

**Through efforts:** Most people instinctively know good qualities from bad. But by knowing alone, one will not be able to overcome one's weakness or build good values. Knowledge can only show that which exists. We must make efforts to remove the bad qualities in us and build the good ones. We must approach these values with a more open mind and accept our weaknesses without resistance.

**How to make efforts to build good values?**

1. **Contemplate the benefits of possessing the values:** Many can see the benefits compromising their values bring them, the instant gratification they gain from compromising them. We must, therefore, contemplate the benefits the values bring us. We do not make any efforts to attain these values because we do not see their benefits.
2. **Contemplate the loss the lack of values brings us:** We must contemplate the loss of compromising good values. Being able to foresee the loss is mental maturity. It helps us retain our values even when compromising them seems tempting.
3. **Good associations:** To build good values, we must be with those who appreciate and adhere to them. It is easier to attain good qualities in association with people who already have them or are trying to build them. Books can also serve as good company. It is also important to remove ourselves from those with contradictory characteristics.
4. **Reward:** We can appreciate or reward ourselves when we keep up our values. Rewarding ourselves will encourage us to build values.
5. **Punish:** We can punish ourselves for breaching values, such as depriving ourselves of food for the day.
6. We must take up one value at a time to master it. When the quality becomes our nature, we can take up another, meditate on it and practice keeping it up.
7. In a situation where we usually slip, we must be cautious and not compromise our values.
8. **Seek help:** Some values help in building other values. We must take the help of values to attain the value we intended to — for example, regulated eating habits aid in meditation.
9. Find the opposite: Our weakness will have a contrary or an opposite quality. We can work on the contrary quality to attain a value or remove bad quality. For instance, to remove greed, we can perform charity.
10. **Perform value meditation:** Several meditations are mentioned in the scriptures to attain values. During value meditation, one must contemplate the greatness of the value and meditate on it. If we intend to develop peace, we must imagine ourselves being peaceful and experience the outcome during the meditation. Though this is just an imagination, we will experience the fruits of the value during meditation. This will bring us joy and satisfaction. By tasting the fruit beforehand, we will aim to attain it. For instance, we experience the joy of giving only when we give. If one does not give, he will not know the joy of sharing and will not give. The value

meditation breaks the vicious cycle by showing one the fruits one will attain even without having that quality in one inherently.

### **The king and the thief**

Once when a king travelled through a forest, a thief robbed him of all his valuables. To hide, the thief entered the hut of a sage when the sage was away. So, the thief quickly wore the sage's robes and sat as though he was meditating. The king entered the hut in search of the thief. On seeing a sage, the king prostrated before the sage, who was indeed the thief. The king's reverence for the sage made the thief realize how profound it was to be a sage. He experienced the result of knowledge and penance even though he did not have either of them. He renounced everything and became a sage. Even though we may experience the fruits of the values only in our imagination, by experiencing them, we will build a taste for them. Having experienced the higher joy, we will not compromise it for the lower ones.

11. **Prayer:** Prayers are actions, and all actions have consequences. In the process of acquiring value, we will fail several times. Prayers help overcome the exhaustion of repeated failure.



## **The Values**

### **1. Humility**

Humility is the quality of being humble. It is being free from pride and arrogance. Some feel superior to others because of their wealth, status, position, power, knowledge, etc. Humility is not having pride, even if one has everything. According to the scripture, we must remove our vanity (*abhimana*) from all our five sheaths (*pancha kosha*) — the body, mind, intellect and so on to attain liberation.

#### **The consequences of pride**

1. Pride and arrogance will not allow one to surrender to the guru, so one will not be able to attain knowledge. One must be humble to be taught.
2. When one is arrogant and proud, he will lose respect.
3. Expectations for more respect from others come from pride, and when that is not met, it leads to mental turbulence.

#### **Methods to remove pride**

1. All the greatness in us is *Ishvara's* (God's) glory. We become proud of our success because we think it is our own accomplishments. If we take them as God's grace, there will be no reason for pride. We must remind ourselves during each win and victory that it is God's grace.
1. We must look at the impermanence of all that we have attained. Any material possessions and even our bodies are temporary. They will leave one day just like how they came one day. Even if we enjoy what we attain, we must know they will go. Understanding the transience nature of everything will help us build dispassion.
2. Another reason for pride is comparison. If we do not compare ourselves with others and think we are superior, we will not develop pride.

### **2. Modesty**

One thing is to feel superior, and another is to act superior. Modesty is refraining from showing one's superiority, success, knowledge, charity or penance to others. It is refraining from vaunting about oneself.

**The consequences of being conceited:**

The reason we are not modest is that we want others to think highly of us. When one shows off one's penance or charity, he already experiences the fruits of his good deed from the joy of flaunting. The deed will not yield any more merits. The penance will not result in the purity of mind, and all the merits of the deed perish. When one experiences pride in his deed, the fruits of his deeds are experienced.

**Methods to become modest:**

It is natural for one to be conceited about anything one has achieved. But one must try to be modest by:

1. By leading a simple life: We must consciously follow a simple lifestyle in eating, clothing, and keeping possessions.
2. In order to stay modest, we can avoid talking about ourselves to others. This will reduce one's conceitedness, at least at the level of speech.
3. One must keep his good qualities to himself. It is best if it remains hidden from all.

**3. Non-violence**

Non-violence is considered the greatest of all values. Non-violence must be practised in thoughts, speech, and action. We understand violence as action, but it can take form in speech and thoughts. Hurtful talking or not talking in order to hurt someone is violence through speech. Cursing someone in mind or intending bad for others is non-violence through thoughts.

Adhering to non-violence is one of the greatest virtues for one on the path of knowledge and liberation. There is no way out of *samsara* through violence. It is not easy to follow non-violence, but it develops by building other values.

*Non-violence is the highest **dharmā**. Non-violence is the best **tapas**.  
Non-violence is the greatest gift. Non-violence is the highest self-  
control. Non-violence is the highest sacrifice. Non-violence is the  
highest power. Non-violence is the highest friend. Non-violence is the  
highest truth. Non-violence is the highest teaching.*

— Mahabharata XVIII:116.37-41.

**The root cause of violence:**

1. Hatred: Violence is hatred in action. Hatred is not an impulsive action. It is cultivated over a period of time. We must refrain from cultivating it. Violence can be removed by removing hatred.
2. Anger: Anger can emerge momentarily, but it causes a lot of harm. In anger, we harm not only those who we do not like but also those we love. Anger must be dealt with without hurting others through thoughts, words or deeds.
3. Another subtle reason for the violence is that those who have been subject to violence tend to be violent themselves instead of being compassionate. This is hard to see, unlike the other two reasons. Some might have been in sorrow for a long period of time, like poverty, ill health, abuse, or shame. The hurt lingers in their minds and manifests as violence when they get a chance. If we understand this, we

won't be angry with those who hurt us and will also refrain from being violent towards others because of our past sorrows or hurt.

4. Some use violence as a means to achieve their desire.

5. Other reasons include carelessness, lack of forgiveness or patience, and insensitivity.

Only those who have a sensitive mind will understand the scriptures. Without sensitivity, no amount of learning will inculcate wisdom.

***It is the determination of the pure in the heart never to injure, even in return to those who have cherished enmity and hatefully injured.***

— Tiru Kural, Verse 312.

### **What is non-violence?**

If one is in a situation where all options cause harm, choosing the option that causes the least harm is considered non-violence. For instance, if the invading army is not defended appropriately in a war, even though it may involve violence, the invaders will cause more harm and destruction. In this case, preventing bigger harm by causing lesser harm to protect many is non-violence. Non-violence can be compared to amputation. Although we may be causing some damage, it is for the greater good. Another example is reprimanding children; although it may cause them sorrow, it must be done if required. Otherwise, they will grow up without a sense of right and wrong and cause more harm to themselves and others. Therefore, non-violence is not refraining from all sorts of harming itself, but it is choosing what is appropriate in any circumstances.

***When one is established in non-injury, beings give up their mutual animosity in his presence.***

— Yoga Sutras

### **The consequences of violence:**

1. According to the Dharmashastras (the book on law and conduct), if we harm others through the body, we will experience pain through our body as a consequence, and if we harm others through speech or thoughts, we will experience sorrow from others similarly.
2. Some people may have all the material wealth and health, yet they may not be happy. Their minds may be turbulent. In contrast, some others may have nothing but are at peace. These are the manifestations of the consequences of our actions from many lifetimes. The violence we subject others to accumulates as demerit for us. These demerits will manifest as sorrow in the body and/or mind.
3. A violent mind cannot act as an instrument to attain knowledge. The mind that is either elated or sad is not ready for learning.

### **Methods to become non-violent:**

1. One must retrospect one's actions at the end of the day. We must contemplate how much and why we may have hurt others. The reason is often the trigger. Once we understand the trigger, we must eliminate it.
2. The scriptures dictate that we are all one — non-dual. One who understands the essence of the scriptures will ultimately become non-violent. Until then, we must try with awareness to reduce all possible violence we subject others to.

*Those who have seen all beings in themselves and themselves in all beings do not have any hatred for this reason.*

— Isha Upanishad.

#### 4. Forbearance

Forbearance is endurance and forgiveness.

**Endurance:** Endurance is the ability to withstand unpleasant or difficult situations. It is being able to tolerate difficulty and come through it. Sorrow and difficulties are a part of everybody's life, and we must endure them because there aren't always choices around such situations. We should try to overcome our difficulties, but some circumstances are inevitable regardless of how much we try. We must accept them. Endurance makes us stronger. We will encounter hindrances in anything we do. If we cannot cross the obstacles, we will not achieve anything spiritual or material. We must endure hardships even to attain good values. If we do not endure the pain on the path to anything, we will only begin and never complete our chosen goal.

Some look to perform *prayaschitta karma* (compensatory actions) to deflect their pain and difficulties. Though it is not forbidden in the scriptures, they largely reduce one's power to endure. Always finding ways to escape challenges will only result in wasting time. One must learn to endure pain and progress faster spiritually.

##### **Methods to learn endurance:**

1. Knowledge: We must understand that we may not have a choice to escape our suffering most of the time. Pain is an inevitable part of living. If one has done all he can to evade the situation and yet cannot, he must endure it and go through it. One must build endurance through knowledge.
2. Practice: We must go through difficulties and practice endurance. If we do not have any difficulty, we must take up some penance to build endurance. Penance strengthens one. There's no better way to build strength except by taking up difficulties and enduring them. We learn to walk by walking only. Similarly, we learn to endure by enduring. Each difficulty is a chance to learn and build endurance. We must not resist what cannot be changed.

**Forgiveness:** We must forgive those who may have caused us sorrow.

##### **Consequences of not forgiving:**

1. We build hatred towards those who we do not forgive. In which case, we will have an object for hate in our minds. We have various emotions in our minds and objects (or people) associated with these emotions. If we do not have an object for an emotion, that emotion will not linger in our minds. If we do not have an object for hate, we will not have hate in us.
2. We become happy and peaceful when we think of someone we love, while our mind becomes turbulent when we think of someone we hate. Hate harms us more than those who we hate. Therefore, by forgiving, we become the first beneficiary. Our mind becomes calm and light when we forgive.
3. Forgiving requires power. It requires more strength to forgive than to hate. One must build the power to forgive for one's own good. Otherwise, hatred will harm oneself more than those they hate. Forgiving does not mean accepting others' wrongdoings. At times it may be necessary to discipline the wrongdoers. However, it is also necessary to forgive them. We can forgive others, knowing they caused us sorrow. They will experience consequences for their actions, but we must

forgive for our own peace.

**Methods to build forgiveness:**

1. We will understand the benefits of forgiving only by experiencing it.
2. We must see the ignorance behind those who hurt us. Some cause others sorrow because they do not have a sense of right and wrong in most cases. If we see their ignorance, it will be easy to forgive.
3. Even if others hurt us with awareness, we must still forgive them, for they lack the strength and the power to refrain from causing us pain.
4. We must build unconditional compassion towards all. Compassion builds forgiveness.
5. We must accept what we cannot change.

**5. Straightforwardness**

Straightforwardness in thought, speech and actions is a virtue. The thoughts, speech, and actions must align. One must speak what he thinks and do what he says. Straightforwardness is the absence of deception, crookedness, and the intentions to delude someone.

**Consequences of not being straightforward:**

If we say something that we know we will not keep up, we will lose confidence in ourselves and eventually lose faith in ourselves. We cannot accomplish anything if we do not have faith in ourselves. We may think we are cheating others, but we are only deceiving ourselves.

**Methods to become straightforward:**

It may not be easy to straighten thoughts, speech, and actions in one step. First, we must align our words with our actions. We must only say what we can do. We could start with small things and build this value up. To build awareness when we slip, we can take up some punishment. When the words and actions align, we must align the thoughts with the words in the same way.

**6. Service to the *guru***

Firstly, we must not accept anything without giving something back in return. Knowledge must also be attained in the same way. The scriptures say there are three ways to attain knowledge: by serving the *guru*, compensating monetarily, and exchanging knowledge. Out of the three, the best way to attain knowledge is by serving the *guru*. The student who leaves everything and goes to the *guru* with only one goal (liberation) must serve the *guru*.

**Need for service:**

1. *Karma yoga* is essential to purify one's mind. Some might have come to the *guru* without having a chance to perform *karma yoga* or without a pure mind. The scriptures cannot purify one's mind; here, serving the *guru* serves as an instrument to purify one's mind. Service to the *guru* serves as *karma yoga* for the seeker.
2. One's ego will not let one surrender easily. Through serving the *guru*, one attains humility and the attitude to surrender to the *guru*.
3. Even if the scriptures are true, one will not attain knowledge from them without faith in them. By seeing the result of the knowledge in one's *guru*, he builds faith in the scriptures. Service is a means to go near the *guru*. When one goes near the *guru*, he will be able to see the result of the knowledge in the *guru*.
4. A *guru* can see a student, understand his strengths and weaknesses, and therefore



prescribe more suitable spiritual practices based on his needs.

5. One becomes what he worships. By serving, one absorbs the quality of his *guru*.

**How can we know if we have the right *guru*?** A student will not have enough knowledge to judge the *guru*. Our aim, therefore, must be to become the right student, and God will give us the right *guru*.

## 7. Purity/ Cleanliness of body and mind

We must make time and effort to keep the mind and body clean.

### Methods to purify:

1. First, we must understand the importance of keeping ourselves (our body and mind) clean. We must build awareness around cleanliness.
2. We must keep our minds clean by weeding out bad thoughts. We must entertain only good thoughts and emotions. We must learn to stop meditating on the unnecessary thought that crosses our minds.
3. One must build discrimination power to know what emotions and thoughts are good and supportive and which are not. We must look for the contradictory quality for our bad qualities and build them. Two opposite characteristics cannot stay together in one. For instance, if one's bad quality is anger, he must develop peace. If it is greed, he must build the attitude of giving, for pride, humility, and for delusion, knowledge. Also, if one is in *tamas guna* (dullness), one must move to *rajas*. Those in *rajas* must aim for *sattva*. With awareness and discrimination, one must constantly keep his mind and his surroundings clean and pure.

## 8. Steadfastness

One must be firm in two things

1. One's goal
2. The means to achieve the goal.

To achieve anything, we must set goals. When the goals are set, we must evaluate where we stand against those goals and how to achieve them. We must break our goals into smaller ones and achieve them one at a time. For instance, if liberation is one's goal, knowledge, discipline, building good values, and spiritual practices are smaller goals. One must take up these small achievable goals and fulfil them one by one.

### Methods to become steadfast:

**Endurance:** One can achieve any goal by enduring hindrances and obstacles on the path to the goal. While performing spiritual practices, we will face a lot of hindrances, but our aim should not be to remove hardships. Instead, we must learn to tolerate them and keep going forward. Also, when one starts experiencing comfort and happiness, the indulgence will become a hindrance to further spiritual progress. Comfort and joy are bigger distractions than sorrow. When we encounter an abundance of comfort and joy, building dispassion is the means to growth. Many spiritual practices bring material well-being and comfort as a side effect. When this happens, we must not lose track of our goals by indulging in them.

The intense desire for liberation (*mumukshutva*) keeps one firm in one's spiritual goal. Desire is a power. Most people cannot desire higher good. For many, the power to desire is very low that they desire only lowly things. When the power to desire has reached its fullest, one naturally desires the highest. When we have the desire, we will have the endurance to bear the failures and be strengthened by them.

## 9. Self-control

The body, mind and senses are our instruments, and we must control them with correct discrimination. They must behave according to our direction. The sense organs we use for indulgence become weak and lose their power eventually. We become enslaved by them, which will lead us to sorrow.

### Methods to achieve self-control:

1. The body, mind and senses get used to the comforts we give them and become enslaved by them. And when we withdraw these comforts, they suffer. Therefore, the body and mind must not indulge in sense objects. They must follow the direction of the intellect. They must use objects for survival alone and not draw pleasure from them. We must learn to live without all those that are not absolute necessities. We have our dependencies and weaknesses. We must find them out and work on them.
2. Mind: The main reason the mind gets turbulent is because it lacks dispassion. The mind broods over anything it values. When the value from an object is taken out, the mind will not think about it.
3. At times, even when an object's value is removed, the mind broods over it out of practice. It is the nature of the mind to think of the same things out of practice. This attribute of the mind serves us when we need to master something. But if we practice thinking about impermanent objects, it will only bring us sorrow. In such cases, we must make efforts to come out of such thinking. *Japa* (repeated reciting of the chosen God's name) tames the mind and makes it calm.
4. The more values we attain, the calmer our minds will become. The mind will be turbulent if we have hate, greed, and other bad characteristics.

## 10. Dispassion

We must develop dispassion towards everything we can experience. We must be non-attached to all objects and use them for survival. We get attached to:

- The objects we experience
- The objects we see
- The objects we hear about

Anything we experience for the first time creates mental imprints (*samskaras*). These imprints cause attachment or aversion towards the objects associated with the experiences. Sometimes just by seeing an object, even without experiencing it, we desire it and build an attachment towards it. Desires also arise from hearing about the objects. For example, people desire heaven just by hearing about the joy and comfort it offers.

Desires do not vanish after experiencing them. There is an uncountable number of desires, and we cannot experience all of them to renounce them. Non-attachment to all experiences is dispassion. Not being enslaved by the comforts an object offers is dispassion. It is also not hating an object. Dispassion is when we neither hate nor love the object. It is removing the indulgence attitude from all objects.

Dispassion is the perfection of the mind. It is attained in steps with time. One must make efforts to build it. We desire objects based on our maturity level. We are not attached to the same objects we once were. The object of desire changes with time. We may have attained dispassion towards objects we valued and enjoyed at one point in time, e.g., toys. The same objects do not bring us joy, nor do we value them anymore. Similarly, we will lose interest in the objects we value now. Our interests will shift towards other objects. The objects of our desires change, but our attachment towards objects will linger. Only

when our attitude towards indulgence changes will we attain dispassion.

### **Consequences of not renouncing**

1. The turbulence of the mind: Attachment to objects or people leads to the turbulence of the mind. It is necessary to have a calm mind to meditate. If we sit to meditate with lots of attachment, we will meditate only on those objects. Meditation is easy after renouncing. Without dispassion, we cannot progress on our path to liberation. When we move away from objects, we also move away from the sorrow they eventually cause.
2. The desire for liberation: Only by renouncing will one even desire liberation. At times we may have the power to discriminate but may not have the power to refrain from indulgences. If this is our situation, the scriptures give us complete freedom to experience all indulgences under the condition that we experience them righteously. If one is unable to leave the indulgences and desire liberation even after knowing the nature of the world, he can indulge, but all his indulgences must be acquired righteously. The Vedas themselves have rituals for satisfying one's desires. By being on the righteous path, one will experience crapulence from all his indulgences and eventually leave them. Dispassion cannot be forced on oneself or others. However, righteousness can be forced on oneself. There are two benefits to adhering to righteousness. Firstly, one attains what he desires. Secondly, as a result of leading a righteous life, one builds the ability to discriminate. To progress fast, one must experience indulgences righteously and in moderation. Some renounce through discrimination, and some others through righteousness. But before renouncing completely, if one leaves everything behind to lead an ascetic life, he will become self-deluded.

### **Methods to build dispassion:**

1. Discrimination (*viveka*): At times, we feel non-attached to everything around us during a loss or a failure because of deep sorrow. This is not the real dispassion but is a consequence of the situation. This indifference to all pleasure does not last long. In such a case, one is not in the right frame of mind to enjoy indulgences. With time or when the situation changes, one's desire to indulge comes back. The real renunciation comes only from discrimination — by understanding the fundamental nature of the objects and the world around us. However, discrimination does not always result in dispassion. Most are into indulgence mainly because they do not even have the discrimination power. Some people, even knowing the nature of the world, are unable to renounce it. It is a struggle and effort to attain the ability to renounce and be non-attached to all the objects around one. We should know that:
2. All indulgences will only make one weak.
3. No material objects have the power to satisfy one forever.
4. The joy and comfort of material objects are only temporary. When they leave or get destroyed, it will cause much more sorrow.
5. Our desires bind us. The more we get used to indulgences, the more we will be enslaved by them.
6. The world is beautiful only until one understands its true nature. When one develops discrimination power, he will not find any beauty in this transient world.
7. One experiences joy based on where one's *abhimana* is. *Abhimana* means our identity, pride or self-conception. If one identifies with the body, the bodily pleasure one experiences is the limit of his joy. Clothing, food etc., will bring one

the most joy. If the identity goes beyond the body to the mind, one attains dispassion towards bodily pleasure. But will have indulgence in the objects of the mind. When the identity moves above in the sheaths (*kosha*), for instance, to the sheath of wisdom (*vijanamaya kosha*), one enjoys intellectual indulgence. So, as one's identity moves above, to the higher sheaths (*kosha*), one cannot derive pleasure from the experiences of the lower sheath. On moving to the higher level of identity, one naturally attains dispassion to the joy from the lower level or lower sheath (*kosha*). We must, therefore, move our consciousness to higher levels with effort.

In the human plane, one experiences humanly possible pleasures. If one renounces these pleasures, one will experience much more pleasure than humanly possible. But many think there is no joy in renouncing as they do not have the capacity to renounce and experience the joy beyond.

### 11. Absence of Egotism

*Ahamkara* means ego. *Ahamkara* means identifying with the body. In certain contexts, it can also mean pride. One must remove *ahamkara*.

#### Methods to remove ego:

The thought that "I am the body" goes away with knowledge of the Self. However, before we attain knowledge of the Self, we must remove the thought through renunciation. We derive the most pleasure from where we keep our identity. If we identify ourselves with our body the most, we derive the most pleasure from it. It can be from indulgence in food or decorating ourselves. As we indulge with a sense organ or body, we identify more and more with that sense organ or body. Therefore, in order to remove the "I-ness" from the body, mind, and intellect, we must reduce the pleasure or comfort we derive from it. As we reduce our indulgence, we will be able to reduce the "I-ness" associated with it. There are specific penances to remove our identity from our body and sense organs, like fasting, non-speaking, modest living etc.

### 12. Understanding the flaws of mortal life

We must contemplate the miseries of birth, sickness, old age, and death. On thinking over and over again about the flaws of mortal life, we will seek to free ourselves from it.

When we see an object, we only see the joy we can derive from it and seldom think about the pain it is capable of causing. Therefore, our mind chases all objects it desires to indulge in them. Our mind lingers over the pleasure they can derive from the objects without at all thinking of the eventual sorrow they will bring. The best example of this is our body. It is through the body we experience all sorts of pleasure, but eventually, the body will itself become a pain. The sickness and old age, which ultimately the body must experience, are very painful. However, we do not see the eventual pain our bodies subject us to when we derive pleasure from it through our indulgences. It is the delusion that veils the flaws of mortal life, making it appear delightful. The body is transient, and the pain is inevitable.

The world around us is also like our bodies — transient and a cause for sorrow. If one thinks the world is a place of joy, it is because of his circumstances. One's health, wealth, power, position, and other factors largely determine the amount of pleasure one derives from the world. When one's circumstances change, one's perception of the world changes. During sickness or old age, our ability to interact with the world diminishes greatly. We cannot enjoy the world but will only be burdened by our own bodies. The

people and the world we have been interacting with vary largely with the change in us. Even if we experience the highest possible joy from this world, it is transient, and no one knows for how long it will last.

To understand the world's transient nature, we must look at our elders who have enjoyed everything. However, they may have sacrificed everything (or may have been taken away from them) because of old age or sickness. By seeing others, we must understand how pleasures become a pain in no time.

We must think through the temporary lower joy we are deluded by. Contemplating these may cause discomfort and fear, but eventually, we will get clarity and knowledge through this process. By seeing the flaws, we can see the totality of the world.

We get attached to objects or people by meditating on the joy we get from them. And so, to remove the attachment from the objects, we must meditate on their flaws — the sorrow they will eventually bring us. By reading or listening to the glory of dispassion, we cannot attain it. We must make constant efforts to remove our indulgence by thinking about the flaws. In general, one must think of the eventual consequences of anything one is attached to. We build dispassion by understanding the flaws of mortal life.

### **13. Removal of mine-ness**

When we get attached to an object (or people), we build "mine-ness" around it. Any object that we are attached to has the power to affect us. We must remove the attitude of ownership (mine-ness/ possessiveness) from all objects (or people). We must interact with everything around us without attachment towards them — the "mine-ness" in them.

#### **Consequences of possessiveness:**

1. The mine-ness attitude restricts other people and their freedom, which in turn affects our own.
2. We cannot keep others under control for long. Such relationships will become sour. They also make the mind turbulent and cause sorrow.
3. We become deluded when we are attached to something or someone. In delusion, we lose our discrimination power and may even compromise our integrity for those we are attached to. Arjuna was ready to compromise justice because of his attachment to the extended family.

#### **Methods to remove "mine-ness":**

1. All relationships are temporary. We cannot have them forever. Even our relationship with our *guru* is temporary.
2. We are not the owner of anything. Everything we have is because of God's grace and is temporary.
3. We try to keep things under control because of our insecurities. Keeping people or objects under our ownership makes us feel secure. But this is a false sense of security, and we must leave them by keeping faith in a higher power.

### **14. Non-clinging**

We build "I-ness" towards those we are close to, for example, our children/partners. Because of "I-ness", we cling to them and experience all sorrows they do. Our attachment should not become clinginess which in turn results in misery.

#### **Consequences of clinging:**

1. All relationships are temporary. If nothing else, death will separate us from our loved ones.
2. Clinging on to others without reciprocation will lead to distress.



### Methods to remove clinginess:

1. Any relationship between two people is due to their *karma*. *Karma* binds us. We meet or enter a relationship with somebody, including the one with our *gurus*, because of our *karma*. It can be either because of our penance or because of our sins. And we will be together with them only until the *karma* is over. When *karma* works itself out, people get separated either by choice or death, much like two planks floating in the sea, getting together and getting separated because of the waves. *Karma* is like the waves that bring people together and separate them.
2. All people are born out of their own *karma*. We do not create anyone. Even parents give children only their gross bodies. We bring our own minds with the imprints, tendencies and *karmas*. We must love all without being excessively attached to them.

### 15. Even-mindedness in both desired and undesired situations

One must develop the characteristic of maintaining equanimity under all circumstances and conditions, either desirable or not. Even mindedness in all dualities like joy, sorrow, honour, and humiliation is a sign of knowledge.

We get a human birth when our merits and demerits are about equal. When the merits are more, one gets a superior birth, such as demigods, and when the demerits are more, one gets lower births, like plants and animals. The demerits inevitability show up as undesirable circumstances in all our lives from time to time. Nobody experiences only joy or sorrow throughout their entire life. The desirable and undesirable circumstances come out of our *prarabdha karma*. And so, it is not in one's control to completely evade the outer circumstances. But we can control our response to outer circumstances. If we understand the workings of *karma* will be able to accept even the toughest of situations.

#### Consequences of non-equanimity:

1. Without even-mindedness, we will not be able to determine our state of mind; only the circumstance will dictate our state of mind.
2. The mind will become turbulent. A turbulent mind cannot be used to attain wisdom from the scriptures.
3. One will be enslaved by the circumstances and cannot be the master of his own mind.

#### Methods to build equanimity:

1. Knowledge: Most of the time, we do not have the power to change the people or circumstances that cause us sorrow. We must also not assume that we will suffer if the circumstances or people change. Sometimes the only option we have is to change our response to them. If we understand this, we will not try to change what is external. Everyone lives according to their natures, imprints, knowledge and circumstances.
2. *Prasad buddhi*: One must accept all the joy and sorrow as God's grace. Both are rewards. Only through the pain do we get purified. We must look at our adversities as rewards for our penance.
3. *Anitya buddhi*: Both joy and sorrow are temporary. Suffering will also pass.
4. **Total acceptance**: Equanimity comes as a fruit of our penance. One attains a frame of mind through penance and spiritual practices in which one rejects nothing but only witnesses everything.

### 16. Devotion



Lord Krishna emphasizes one-pointed devotion.

### **Need for devotion**

1. Values are a prerequisite to learning the scriptures. A spiritual aspirant will fail several times to uphold good values and remove the bad ones. During fatigue, failure and frustration, devotion helps one continue the arduous spiritual journey. The spiritual path will seem hard and limited if one has to complete it only through effort and willpower. The same will seem attainable if one feels there is a greater power with him in the task.
2. A spiritual aspirant must have emotional maturity. One with a sense of lacking or craving for any fulfilment has not perfected his mind enough to grasp the knowledge from the scriptures. One can fulfil the lack by showing love to God as he would to his mother/father/children or any other unfulfilled relationship. Hinduism has several forms of God for one to choose from and show devotion in one's own way to attain emotional fulfilment.
3. To follow righteousness: The Vedas that show us the path of righteousness are said to have come from the creator Himself. If one does not revere the creator, one will not value the path of righteousness given by Him. One devoted to the creator will not disrespect His teaching, while it is easier to compromise values without devotion. Being righteous in all areas of one's life is hard, and it is possible only out of great love and respect for its creator.

### **Methods to build devotion:**

1. Association with devotees: We must surround ourselves with other devotees or those trying to become devotees to build devotion. Association with books also uplifts us on the spiritual path. Reading the scriptures or about the lifestyles of other devotees helps build devotion.
2. Knowledge about *Ishvara* (God) helps build devotion.
3. The attitude of devotion comes out as actions. One can imitate the actions of the devoted or their ways of worship to build devotion.

## **17. Solitude**

In this context, solitude means practising being in seclusion as a preparation for taking up asceticism later in life. Solitude can be practised within one's house, and once in a while, one must move away from all acquaintances to experience complete isolation. While in solitude, it is important to be awake and contemplate the goals and teachings. Solitude is penance and must be taken up by oneself as often as possible.

### **Why is solitude necessary?**

1. In solitude, the values become our nature, so we must be in solitude once in a while to assimilate the values we learn from the scriptures.
2. Being able to think deeply about something is power. We will be able to build such power in solitude.
3. We will be able to build discrimination in solitude. When one is among other people, one is constantly involved in worldly affairs and material discussions. Under such circumstances, one will not be able to build discrimination.
4. In solitude, we will be able to think independently. Our dependencies on others reduce greatly when we are alone, which is a great way to build individuality and self-confidence.
5. Our tendencies (*vasanas*) come out in solitude. When we are with others, our tendencies are hidden deeply in us. Solitude is a mirror of one's mind. Both good

and bad in us will be shown to us. It is a means to bring out our enemy within us. It is important to note that we must not enter complete solitude without perfecting our minds. It will damage us. We must take up being solitude in small steps and perfect our minds first. Ideally, our journey should be removing bad associations first, getting into good associations, and eventually leaving all associations.

### 18. Dissociation

One must move away from people who are unrighteous or materialistic. The Vedas talk about four kinds of people — the unrighteous, the righteous but hedonistic, the ones on the path to liberation, and the liberated. The association with the unrighteous and hedonistic must be avoided completely. Even if they are righteous, the association with materialistic people will fade our dispassion. Hedonistic people have different approaches towards life, which is contrary to the scriptures and their goals. Dispassion builds slowly in steps, and to build dispassion, we must associate ourselves with people who already have it. Association with worldly people will drag us back into the conversations about worldly affairs that the mind will easily get interested in. We will slip from our goal easily. Dissociation and disengaging with such people are necessary to attain our goals.

### 19. Contemplating the benefits of the knowledge

Lord Krishna asks us to contemplate the benefits of attaining knowledge. It means to look at the end result that knowledge brings us. The ultimate result of knowledge is liberation, and the benefits of liberation are profound. One with knowledge begets a fearless mind and does not experience delusion or sorrow. He is neither guilty nor insecure. His mind is always at peace.

#### Why should one contemplate the benefits of knowledge?

Many scriptures, including Gita, discuss the benefits of attaining the knowledge of the Self. This is because the path to attaining it is hard. We must perform several penances to prepare ourselves for knowledge. And despite all the hardships, we will still not succeed immediately. We need the inspiration to continue the practices. Those who know the benefits of knowledge but have not experienced them must contemplate them from time to time. By contemplating the end result and the benefits, we will feel encouraged. The desire to experience the benefits will give us a reason to continue the practices. It will keep us from slipping away.

### 20. The Knowledge of the Self

The direct effort made to understand the Self is called *jnana yoga* (the *yoga* of knowledge). *Jnana yoga* consists of three parts — listening to the *guru*, removing any doubts, and meditating on the Self.

All the twenty values mentioned are divided into two parts — the first nineteen values are categorized as one part and the last as another. Both the parts and their order are important. The first part is preparation for knowledge; the second is attaining knowledge. If one fails in the nineteen values, irrespective of how much he learns the scriptures, he will not gain wisdom. Even if one has not perfected these values but has progressed in them, he will eventually attain knowledge. Even if one has not perfected his mind, by listening to the scriptures, he may not gain wisdom from it, but he will eventually get qualified for the knowledge of the Self.

By listening, we learn to listen by keeping our minds calm, being patient and being receptive to receiving. Therefore, without perfecting the values, if one listens to the

scriptures, it will help him attain qualification for knowledge. And after acquiring the values, if one listens, it will help him to understand them. These values are not necessary only on the spiritual path but are also essential to lead a fulfilling and happy life in the material world. Having learnt about the values, we must desire to attain them even if no one else around us has them.

The scriptures show us the strength and weaknesses of our character. With the newly acquired knowledge about values, we should not find flaws in others or judge others. It is for our own development. Lord Krishna declares these twenty values as knowledge because they are conducive to attaining the knowledge of the Self. And those that are opposed to these values must be shunned as they perpetuate *samsara*.

#### The Values

1. Humility	11. Absence of Egotism
2. Modesty	12. Understanding the flaws of mortal life
3. Non-violence	13. Removal of mine-ness
4. Forbearance	14. Non-clinging
5. Straightforwardness	15. Even-mindedness in both desired and undesired situations
6. Service to the guru	16. Devotion
7. Purity / Cleanliness of body and mind	17. Solitude
8. Steadfastness	18. Dissociation
9. Self-control	19. Contemplating the benefits of the knowledge
10. Dispassion	20. Knowledge of Self

## Verses 8 – 12

Lord Krishna said,

*Humility, modesty, non-violence, forbearing, straightforwardness, service to the guru, purity, steadfastness, self-control, dispassion, absence of egotism, understanding the flaws of mortal life, removal of mine-ness, non-clinging, even-mindedness, devotion, solitude, dissociation, contemplation of benefits of the knowledge of the Self and pursuit of the Absolute Truth—I declare them as knowledge. Those which are contrary to these are ignorance. 13.8- 13.12*



## Part IV

# Para Brahman

Lord Krishna, having detailed *kshetra*, *Kshetrajna* and *jnana* so far, explains *Jneyam*. *Jneyam* means that which is to be known. Lord Krishna says He will detail *Para Brahman* (*Brahman* without attributes), knowing which one attains the deathless state. He refers to this state as *amrutha*. *Amrutha* means a state without sorrow or death, a state of perfect contentment and bliss. Lord Krishna explains the concept of *Brahman* as explained in the Upanishads.

## Para Brahman

### Beginningless

1. *Brahman* is beginningless. *Brahman* is not created by anyone, nor is It made of anything. According to the scriptures, that which is not created cannot be attained by actions. *Brahman* can be grasped by the intellect alone.
2. Anything that is born is bound by time. Being birthless, *Brahman* is not bound by time. *Brahman* is beyond time.
3. *Brahman* is neither a reason (*karana*) for something nor a cause (*kariya*).

### Supreme

*Brahman* is referred to as *Param*, which means the Highest. In this context, it means there is nothing beyond It. *Brahman* is immeasurable. All the objects in the world can be measured with the three principles:

1. Space: any object we experience can be measured by the space they occupy. At a particular time, an object is in a particular place. This also means that it is not in another space at the same time. All objects we perceive are limited by space. When we say an object is here, it also means it is not elsewhere.
2. Time: Any object is limited by time. All objects exist in a particular form only for a particular amount of time. There is no object that will not change or perish with time. All that is manifested are bound by time.
3. Quality: All objects and all people have their own qualities/nature. Anything that we can define by certain qualities or attributes means they do not simultaneously have contrary qualities. Everything is limited by its nature. For instance, an object that is soft will not be hard at the same time.

That which is not bound by any of these three aspects alone is Supreme. There is no limitation to it, and it is then infinite. *Brahman* is not limited by any of these three attributes and is infinite. *Brahman* cannot be conceived by the mind, for everything we understand is within the limits of these three principles.

### Beyond existence and non-existence

*Brahman* is defined as *na sat* — which means not existent, and *na asat* — which means not non-existent. We cannot say *Brahman* exists, nor can we say It does not exist. This can be looked at in two ways.

**The manifested and the unmanifest:** *Sat* means manifested — that which exists, that which has taken a form. *Asat* means unmanifested — non-existent, that which has not come to a form yet. For example, a seed in an unmanifest tree. A seed is *asat*. The tree is the manifested seed. The tree is *sat*. The seed (unmanifest, *asat*) has the power to become a tree (manifest, *sat*). The world has manifested. The unmanifest state from

which it came into manifestation is *maya*. *Brahman* is neither manifested nor is It the unmanifest which will ever manifest. *Brahman* is neither *sat* nor *asat*.

**Existence and non-existence:** Another subtle way to look at the statement is, *sat* means existence. Existence is always associated with an object to refer to its state of being. For example, a pot exists, and if the pot is broken, we say it does not exist. That which existed once eventually becomes non-existent. *Sat* becomes *asat*. When the object perishes, its status of existence also leaves. This is our understanding of existence and non-existence. And all existence we know is bound to non-existence. Existence is understood as the opposite of non-existence and they do exist together. In our experience, therefore, existence is limited by time.

Like existence, non-existence is also not absolute. When there is only clay, the pots are non-existent. When the potter makes the pots from the clay, from being non-existent, the pots become existent. *Asat* becomes *sat*. In the scriptures, these kinds of existences are called transactional reality or transactional existences. *Brahman* is not a transactional reality but the Absolute reality. All objects we know are only in the realms of transactional reality. They have a beginning and an end. We are unable to comprehend Absolute reality because our understanding does not go beyond transactional reality. Transactional reality is a dependent reality. The colour of a cloth is dependent on the cloth. If the cloth perishes, the colour perishes too. This is an example of a dependent reality.

*Brahman* does not have a transactional existence or transactional non-existence. *Brahman* is called *paramarthika satya*, which means the Supreme truth. The sun that illuminates a field shows the crops when they exist and their absence when the field is empty. The sun, however, is not dependent on the crops. It can exist independently and yet show both the existence and the non-existence of the crops on the field. There is an awareness that shows us what exists and what does not. That awareness is Absolute Consciousness. Those that are illuminated by This consciousness are subject to destruction. This pure awareness is beyond our understanding of *sat* and *asat* and is non-perishable. We will experience the deathless state when we understand we are beyond the perishable *sat* and *asat*. Having experienced the deathless state, one will neither fear non-existence nor will try to protect the perishable existence.

#### ParaBrahman

Beginningless  
Supreme  
Beyond existence and non-existence

## Verses 13

Lord Krishna said,

*I shall now describe to you that which is to be known, and by knowing which, one attains immortality. It is the beginningless Supreme *Brahman*, which is beyond existence and non-existence.* 13.13

The Vedas that vastly explain rituals and their consequences cannot explain *Brahman* the same way, for there is nothing apart from *Brahman*. *Brahman* is non-dual. When we begin learning the scriptures, we begin with a dualistic attitude. Even those aware

of *Brahman* understand *Brahman* as a separate entity different from the world. The Upanishads have to remove the dualism and impart the knowledge that *Brahman* is the only Absolute and that there is nothing apart from That Consciousness, contrary to our experience. The scriptures must show us that nothing we experience has an Absolute existence and that everything manifested is all just forms. They also must show that *Brahman*, which we do not experience, is the only Absolute reality. To do this, the Upanishads use a specific method to explain *Brahman*. This method is called *adhyaropa apavada*

### ***Adhyaropa apavada***

*Adhyaropa* means superimposition, and *apavada* means retraction or negation — removal of superimposition. *Adhyaropa – apavada* is the method of superimposition and negation.

*Adhyaropa* is the superimposition of the world on *Brahman*, and *apavada* is refuting this notion by imparting knowledge. *Adhyaropa* accepts everything a student experiences as real — like the world, the body. And *apavada* negates their existence after imparting the knowledge of the Self, essentially declaring that they are only ephemeral reality and not Absolute reality. For example, *adhyaropa apavada* accepts the snake imposed on the rope and removes the snake by showing there is only rope.

The Upanishads use this teaching method because we have a contradictory idea of *Brahman* and the world, like the snake on the rope. The Upanishads superimpose all the creations and experiences on *Brahman* temporarily by saying that *Brahman* is the reason, and the world is the cause. After imparting knowledge about *Brahman*, the Upanishads retract that idea by saying *Brahman* in all there is.

### **Why do the Upanishads use this method?**

When the students begin their study, they come with a dual vision, one of the world and one of the *Brahman*, and among them, the world being experiential seems real to them compared to *Brahman*.

When the *guru* accepts the snake on the rope, he doesn't see the snake himself. He sees it in the understanding of the student. By accepting the snake, both the ignorant and the wise are in the same place to begin with. The world that is experienced will look false and delusional only when it loses the power to cause pain or pleasure to one. As long as one derives pleasure (or pain) from it, it will appear real.

We divide creation into three components: the world, the mind, and the body. The three being experiential, it is easy for the ignorant to believe they are real. The *guru* must show the students that these are ever-changing transients and are only forms and delusions. Lord Krishna uses the *adhyaropa apavada* method to describe *Brahman* to Arjuna.

### **Mind (senses), Body and *Brahman***

Lord Krishna begins *adhyaropa* (superimposition) by saying that *Brahman* is everywhere as hands and feet as eyes, head, mouth, and ears, evading all. By this statement, He removes the duality of the world and *Brahman*. Having said *Brahman* is everything, He also says *Brahman* is free from all the sense organs. This statement is contradictory and is *apavada*.

In general, we regard anything outside our gross body as separate from ourselves. The world and all its objects made of the five primordial elements are lifeless. Our bodies are also made of the five primordial elements, yet they are not lifeless (*jada*). The gross body has a subtle body because of which it perceives. The subtle body illuminated by *Brahman* attains consciousness. The gross body that perceives differentiates itself from the other inanimate objects of the world. During death, consciousness is lost, and the body becomes lifeless like other inanimate objects. We give our body a higher status because our subtle body reflects *Brahman's* consciousness. The body has a special status only until it has consciousness in it.



Otherwise, the gross body is also an inanimate object. The body did not exist in the beginning. It exists in the middle and ceases to exist again. It is temporary. It comes into existence at a particular time for a short period of time. Though it exists for a short period, it does not have an independent existence. The body's existence is dependent on *Brahman*. The body is a delusion (*mitya*). It is just a form. When pots are made from clay, they come into being in the middle and perish. The pots are just forms. They are not real. The clay is real. The consciousness is real. The body is just a form.

We have given reality to our bodies and have mixed it up with "I" — the Self. Like the body, the senses also have an existence only in the middle and are also dependent on *Brahman*. The scriptures do not say they do not exist, but they have a very short existence, which is also dependent. We have given reality to those that are temporary and dependent. They are not real. They are not Absolute reality. The wise understand this, so they watch the world as though a play. The ignorant get caught up and suffer. After one realizes he is *Brahman* and not the body, the world will no longer affect him.

*It is the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the speech of the speech, the life of the life, and the eye of the eye. Knowing thus, the wise, detaching the Self from the senses and relinquishing all desires, become immortal after departing this world.*

— Kena Upanishad

Lord Krishna explains the relationship between the inseparable *Brahman* and the world. He says *Brahman* is the force behind the senses and the awareness of the body. It is the power behind them that cannot be seen.

#### ***Brahman and the world***

*Brahman* is the source of all objects in the world, yet *Brahman* sustains the world without any relationship with it. These two contradictory statements can be correct only when one is real and the other is superimposed.

We can see the superimposed snake only until the rope exists. The rope is real. It is the source and the sustainer of the snake and yet has no relationship with the snake. Like the rope, only *Brahman* is real. All manifestations are superimposed forms like the snake. The non-soul is just a form superimposed on *Brahman*, and it does not have a real and independent existence.

#### ***Brahman and the Gunas***

Lord Krishna says *Brahman* is the enjoyer of all the three *gunas* being *nirguna* — attributeless (without any *guna*). The attributes that we experience are superimposed on *Brahman*.

#### ***Brahman is inside all beings and yet undivided.***

Lord Krishna says *I appear to be divided among all beings, yet I am undivided in them all.*

The entire world is *jada* (lifeless). Our subtle body (mind) is illuminated by the 'cit' (consciousness) of *Brahman*. There are innumerable minds, and each acts according to its imprints and tendencies. Therefore, different bodies experience different emotions and experiences simultaneously though *Brahman* is one without division, without interstice, within and without all.

Death is the subtle body leaving the gross body along with *Brahman's* illumination. Though *Brahman* is undivided, permeating everything, illuminating everything, the gross body without a subtle body unable to be illuminated by *Brahman's cit* becomes *jada* (lifeless) during death.

*Brahman* may appear to be divided within each body, but like the sun, It is the

ever-present single source of illumination. Regardless of the number of mirrors reflecting the sun, it remains undivided and unaffected by them.

*Everywhere is **Brahman***

— The Chandogya Upanishad (3.14.1)

**Brahman** is the illuminator of all.

Light is not a direct instrument for knowledge, but it is because of light we can see and understand all objects. The eyes perceive the light. The eyes know both light and the absence of light (the darkness). The mind behind the eyes comprehends what the eyes see. The mind is, however, *jada* (lifeless). That which is behind the mind that illuminates the mind is called the witness in the scriptures. This witness that watches without any change is **Brahman**. Because of **Brahman**, everything is illuminated, and everything is perceived. It is the power of **Brahman** because of which both light and darkness, both knowledge and ignorance, are known. Every other light is borrowed from another source. **Brahman** is the only source of illumination.

Lord Krishna says the values to be acquired and the goal of attaining knowledge (liberation) are both within one's heart. We all have good within us, and it will come out if we follow the right practices. One must allow for the good to come out when one's own imprints and tendencies hinder them.

According to the scriptures, something cannot come out of nothing. Existence cannot come out of non-existence. Anything that emerges has to come out of something that is already there — that is already existing. Existence can, however, be in two states, the manifested state or the unmanifest state (the potential form). Every human carries within himself the knowledge that brings him the ultimate peace. Liberation is the ultimate peace. One must make the right efforts to bring out the ultimate peace in him.

## Verses 14 – 19

Lord Krishna said,

*With hands and feet, eyes, heads, and faces everywhere, with ears everywhere, It dwells everywhere, pervading all. 13.14*

*Cognizant of all senses, yet devoid of senses, unattached, yet sustainer of everything, transcendental to the qualities, yet their experiencer. Without and within all beings — the moving and the not moving. It is subtle and hence, incomprehensible. It is very far but also very near. 13.15- 13.16*

*Undivided, yet appears as though divided amongst living beings. Know the Supreme to be the sustainer, destroyer, and creator of all beings. 13.17*

*It is the light of all lights, which is beyond darkness, seated in the hearts of all as the knowledge, the object of knowledge and the goal of knowledge. 13.18*

*I have thus revealed to you the meaning of the field, the knowledge, and the object of knowledge. Knowing this, My devotee attains Me. 13.19*



## Part V

# The Nature and the Spirit

## *Prakriti* and *Purusha*

***Prakriti*:** *Prakriti* means nature in a general term, and according to the Vedas, it is the reason for all manifestations. *Prakriti* is the material cause (*upadana karana*) for all manifestations. The modified form of *prakriti*, called *vikriti*, is the manifestation. *Prakriti* is the potential in the unmanifest state, which is the cause for manifestations. The unmanifest world is *prakriti*. The manifested world is *vikriti*. *Prakriti* is the reason (*karana*) and *vikriti* is the cause (*kariya*)

***Purusha*:** In Vedanta, *Purusha* refers to *Nirguna Brahman*. *Purusha* means one who dwells in the city as a witness without having any relationship with anything. The body is compared to a city. And *Purusha* exists in all beings without having any relationship to the beings.

*Purusha* and *prakriti* are both *anadi* (beginningless or origin-less). *Purusha* is origin-less as it exists in all three periods of time. *Purusha* is the only Absolute truth (*Sat*). *Prakriti* is origin-less because it does not have a real existence. *Prakriti* is *asat*.

### How can we categorise *prakriti* as *asat*?

All manifestations are from *prakriti*, which is experiential. Therefore, it is hard to call it non-existent (*asat*). For this reason, it has often been referred to as a delusion (*mitya*). To understand *prakriti* as *asat*, let's take the example of clay and pots. Clay and pots are two different words referring to one object. The clay exists before the pots do. The clay exists when the pots do, and the clay exists after the pots do. Pot is essentially just a form and a name imposed on the clay. The pots cannot exist independently without the clay. Similarly, if we make a bowl out of clay, the clay has a new form and a name. The pots or the bowls do not have a real existence. There is only clay. The clay is *sat*. The pots and the bowls are just names and forms. They did not exist before. They exist in the middle and will eventually lose their existence in that form. That which comes in between and leaves is called a delusion (*mitya*).

All manifestations have birth and death. And when they exist, they are subject to change. The world is *vikriti*, which has come into existence from *prakriti*. *Prakriti* does not have an actual existence, and there cannot be an origin for something that does not exist.

*Purusha* is always there. And so, It does not have an origin. *Prakriti* is not really there; therefore, it also does not have an origin. *Purusha* is the Absolute reality. *Prakriti* is a delusion. *Purusha* is pure consciousness. *Prakriti* is lifeless (*jada*). *Purusha* is the unchanging reality. *Prakriti* is an ever-changing delusion. *Purusha* is devoid of any attributes. *Prakriti* is made of the three *gunas*.

Everything that has manifested is because of *Purusha* and *prakriti*. *Prakriti* first attains a modification and becomes the five primordial elements. The three modes of nature—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*—and their countless combinations also arise from *prakriti*. Lord Krishna defines *prakriti* as:

1. The five primordial elements
2. The nature of all objects (the *gunas*).

The mind, body, and world that originate from *prakriti* also have the same

characteristics as *prakriti*. They are an ever-changing, lifeless delusion made of the three *gunas*. *Purusha*, being the intelligent cause for all manifestations, is the reason for all experiences.

### **The role of *Purusha* and *prakriti* in *samsara***

*Prakriti* is the reason for all manifestations. *Purusha* is the reason for all experiences. If there are only lifeless objects, there will be no transaction. There will be no joy, sorrow, greed etc., and, therefore, no *samsara*. The transaction begins only when there is a subject and an object.

### **Who is transacting with whom? Who is experiencing whom?**

All three (the mind, the body and the world) are lifeless (*jada*). Among them, the subtle body of the beings attains awareness and becomes the experienter. The mind is the experienter (*bhokta*). Being an experienter, the mind has attained a variation from the rest of the lifeless objects like the world. The mind, along with its gross body, becomes the experienter of the world. The *Purusha* is the reason for the mind within the *prakriti* to gain awareness (*chidhabasa*). Therefore, the *jada prakriti* has become conscious. The *prakriti* can be split into two:

1. Lifeless *prakriti* — *jada prakriti*
2. *Prakriti* with awareness — *chetana prakriti*

As long as the mind has an association with the body, the body has awareness. The *prakriti* with the awareness is the doer and the experienter. It can experience joy, sorrow, greed, jealousy and other emotions. *Purusha*, by just being present, is the unchanging intellectual cause of all the manifestations.

Most people assume they are the mind and the body, i.e. the "I" consciousness is in the *prakriti* for most people, so the "I" becomes the doer and the experienter.

### **Who is the *samsari*?**

*Purusha* is only the witness, and *prakriti* is lifeless. Therefore, both may not seem like *samsari*. We cannot define *samsari* because if we do, then the *samsari* becomes real. Only until we analyse the concept of *samsara* will it exist. For example, a flower exists, but if we rip it apart to find where the flower actually is, there will be no flower. It is a form and a name. Similarly, if we analyse the concept of *samsara* further, there will be no *samsara*.

### ***Purusha* is bliss, and *prakriti* is lifeless. How can anyone be a *samsari* when all manifestations came from *Purusha* and *prakriti* alone?**

To answer this, we must understand that the entire world is imposed on *Brahman*. The *samsara* is also imposed on *Brahman*. *Prakriti* is dependent on *Purusha*, and so is *samsara*. The *Purusha* that illuminates *prakriti* exhibits Itself as the *samsari*. The *Purusha* is the awareness in mind, which appears as the *samsari*. When that individual *Purusha* attains knowledge (which is about to be revealed), he attains liberation. One is a *samsari* only until the mind identifies itself as the mind. The attachment one has to the mind and the identification with the mind or the body as "I" is *samsara*. When that identification is removed from the mind and placed on the witness within, the *samsara* is also removed. To witness one's own mind, one has to go beyond his mind. And to go beyond one's mind, one must identify himself as the *Purusha* and remove the attachment from the mind and the body.

*Samsara* is not real. Like the world imposed on *Purusha*, *samsara* is also imposed on *Purusha*. It is the *Purusha* who appears as the *samsari*, and it is also the *Purusha* who is liberated from it.

The reflection of the sun in a pot of water can experience turbulence on shaking the pot even though the sun does not shake. Similarly, the *Purusha* inside the body (illuminating the body) experiences *samsara* even though the *Purusha* is not a *samsari*. The *Purusha* within the body experiences *prakriti* and its *gunas*. Not just sorrow but those who experience joy are also *samsaris*. If one experiences joy, it

creates tendencies in the mind which are the seeds for sorrow. *Purusha* experiences different emotions dwelling inside the mind. The reason for *samsara* is attachment. The *Purusha* inside is attached to the *gunas* of the body and the world. The *Purusha* inside the being gets attached to the forms by taking the *guna* as oneself.

Lord Krishna says *samsara* is taking up a body. Irrespective of whether one takes up a good body like that of the demigods or a lower body like that of humans or animals, they are within the grip of *samsara*. And the reason for taking up a body is attachment. When one takes an object as oneself, he experiences all the joy and sorrow of that object. When one assumes he is the body and the mind, he experiences the joy and sorrow of the body and the mind. There is, however, no relationship between the Self and the body and mind.

### Reasons for *samsara*

The two reasons for *samsara* are:

1. Material cause (*upadana kararna*): Ignorance is the material cause of *samsara*. It is the root cause of *samsara*. Without ignorance, *samsara* will not exist.
2. Intellectual cause (*nimita kararna*): The intellectual cause of *samsara* is attachment. Only ignorance will not cause sorrow. The root cause of sorrow is attachment. The pot will not appear from the clay by itself. There must be a potter to create it. In deep sleep, one does not experience joy or sorrow because one is ignorant and unattached. During deep sleep, there is no division between what is ours and what are others. There is a lack of "mine-ness", and therefore, there is no sorrow. Sorrow arises out of attachment, and the root cause of attachment is ignorance. If we remove the root cause of sorrow, the consequence of which is attachment, we can remove *samsara*. To remove ignorance, we must attain knowledge.

#### Reasons for Samsara

Material cause	Intellectual cause
Ignorance	Attachment

### The Villager

Once, an old man was walking back to his village. On the way, someone told him that his son had died. The old man was taken over by grief. On reaching his house, he realized it wasn't his son who had died, but someone else's son in a different village who he did not know. He was immediately liberated from his grief. This story is an example to show attachment is the cause of sorrow. When there is no attachment, there is no sorrow.

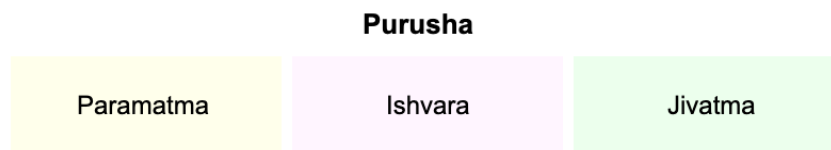
Lord Krishna says he will impart knowledge about *Purusha* and *prakriti*, knowing which one can free oneself from *samsara*. The right knowledge of *Purusha* is to understand Him from three different angles:

1. **The real nature (*swaroopa dristi*):** Seeing *Purusha* as *Paramatma* is seeing the true nature of *Purusha*. *Paramatma* is the Cosmic Soul referred to as the Supreme Self or the Universal Self. *Paramatma* is the *Purusha* that illuminates everything from within and without all. The *Paramatma* is the witness to everything. *Paramatma* does not perform any action or instigate others to perform any action, nor will it prevent anyone from doing anything. *Paramatma* is that which watches the one who watches. *Paramatma* illuminates all illuminations. The *Purusha*, which is the *Paramatma*, illuminates everything like the light. The light does not prevent any action under it nor instigate anyone



into any action. Like the space pervading everything yet not having any relationship with anything, the *Paramatma* pervades everything.

2. **Ishvara:** The manifested God is the reason for the world. The *Purusha*, as *Paramatma*, does not perform any actions. But as *Ishvara*, the *Purusha* is the reason for the world. He creates, sustains and destroys all manifestations along with *maya*. Lord Krishna refers to the *Purusha*, who is the *Ishvara*, as *bharta*, which means the sustainer.
3. **Individual Soul:** The *Purusha* that illuminates the individual being is called the *jivatma* (individual self). It is the reflection of the *Purusha* within the individual. Lord Krishna refers to this *Purusha* as *bhokta*, which means the enjoyer who experiences everything.



## Verses 20 – 24

Lord Krishna said,

*Know that **prakriti** (material nature) and **Purusha** (individual consciousness) are both beginningless and that all the forms and the qualities (the three modes of nature) are born from **prakriti**. 13.20*

*In the matter of creation, **prakriti** is responsible for cause and effect and **Purusha** (as the individual consciousness) is said to be the cause of the experience of pleasure and pain. 13.21*

*When the **Purusha** (individual soul) seated in **prakriti** (the material energy) experiences the qualities (enjoys the three **gunas**) of **prakriti**, the attachment to them causes its birth in superior and inferior wombs. 13.22*

*The Supreme **Purusha** within the body is the Witness, the Permitter, the Supporter, the Experiencer, the Supreme God and the Supreme Soul. 13.23*

*He who knows the **Purusha** and **prakriti**, along with the three **gunas**, will not be born again, regardless of what his current condition is. 13.24*

Different people are in different kinds of work and situations because of their *prarabdha karma*. Lord Krishna assures that having attained knowledge, they will find peace here irrespective of their situations and will not have to take birth again. They will attain *jivanmukti* (liberation when alive) and, when they die, will become a *videhamukta* (liberated without a body).





## Part VI

# Conclusion

*Kshetrajna*, *Jneyam* and *Purusha* are the same. They refer to *Brahman*. *Kshetra* is the body and all the lifeless objects in the world. By *jnana*, Lord Krishna means values by attaining which one qualifies for the Supreme knowledge. Lord Krishna concludes this chapter by discussing:

- The practices through which one attains liberation
- The nature of *Paramatma*
- The results of attaining knowledge

### The practices through which one attains liberation

Lord Krishna discusses the five steps that lead to liberation.

#### 1. *Karma Yoga*

*Karma yoga* has been emphasized several times. *Karma yoga* is beholding the right attitude while performing our duties and receiving its fruits. We must begin our lives by doing *karma yoga*. We interact with the world in two ways, as a doer (*karta*) and as enjoyer/ receiver (*bhokta*). *Karma yoga* is holding the right attitude in both these interactions. It states how one must perform actions and how one must receive the rewards of his actions. In short, *karma yoga* is righteous living.

**As a doer (*karta*):** We all have several professional and personal duties, like being a parent, duty towards our parents and others. *Karma yoga* is performing our duty perfectly, irrespective of our likes and dislikes and not expecting right over the beneficiary. When one performs action solely for pleasure (*kamya karma*), one must adhere to righteousness. The scriptures prohibit certain *karmas*, and they must never be done.

**As a receiver (*bhokta*):** When we perform our duties correctly, they will benefit others. We must not expect right over them. We must accept all that we receive as God's grace wholeheartedly without complaining or seeing its limitations.

*Karma yoga* is worship through work. We attain purity of mind when we perform actions and receive the fruits according to the guidelines of *karma yoga*. Through *karma yoga*, the attraction and aversion in our minds get reduced significantly, which otherwise would lead to turbulence in our minds. Discrimination develops in a calm mind. Our intellect which only sees the joy in the world develops to see the sorrow in it. Discrimination helps us differentiate the permanent from the transient. Having understood the real and the unreal, one moves away from the transient to pursue the permanent. Moving away from the transient is renunciation, and moving towards the permanent is *mumukshutva* — the quality of yearning for liberation. Discrimination does not develop for those who compromise righteousness. Through *karma yoga*, one builds discrimination and, therefore, dispassion for the world and the longing for liberation.

#### 2. *Upasana*

*Upasanas* are practices to perfect our minds so that we can understand the scriptures. We cannot begin to meditate by being in action. The actions arise from *rajas guna*, and when our likes and dislikes are strong, it is not easy to sit down and meditate.

Through *karma yoga*, we must reduce the force of attraction and aversion in our minds. Then we must bring the mind under control through various practices. Through *upasanas*, our goals will become clear. From being a *mumukshu*, we will become a *jijnasu* (immense desire to attain knowledge).

### 3. *Sravana*

*Sravana* is listening to the scripture from a *guru* until one attains complete knowledge of the Self. Through *upasana*, the mind must be made to stand still on an object for long, as the focus is required in *sravana*. We learn about *Ishvara* (manifested God), *jiva* (individual), and the world by listening to the scriptures.

### 4. *Manana*

One's experience is contradictory to what is being told in the scriptures and, therefore, will have a lot of questions while learning. *Manana* is removing the doubts by respectfully asking the *guru*, ideally while doing *sravana*.

### 5. *Nididhyasana*

The one who has completed all the four steps above will understand that he is the indestructible Soul and that the world is unreal. Even at this stage, there will be impediments to achieving union with this newly acquired knowledge. The impediments are one's own mental imprints (*samskaras*) and tendencies (*vasanas*). Even after attaining knowledge, if one constantly transacts with the world, he will fall back into old habits and thoughts. One must practice standing still in the knowledge of the Self through meditation. This meditation is called *Nididhyasana*. *Nididhyasana* must be done after attaining the knowledge of the Self and removing all doubts around it.

On completing all five steps successfully, one becomes liberated. Lord Krishna condenses these steps and says some see the Soul through their intellect because of meditation, with the help of their mind, some listen to the scriptures, and others perform *karma yoga*. Even if one is not scholarly in Sanskrit or all other areas of Vedas but is committed to listening to the scriptures, he will cross over sorrow, death and *samsara*.

#### Five Steps to Liberation

Karma Yoga  
Upasana  
Sravana  
Manana  
Nididhyasana

## Verses 25 – 26

Lord Krishna said,

*Some behold the Supreme Self through meditation within their self, others by the path of knowledge (*jnana yoga*), and some others by right action (*karma yoga*). 13.25*

*There are others unaware of these paths, worship the Supreme having heard of it from others; they also cross over death through such devotion. 13.26*

Everything (both animate and inanimate) is born of the union of the *Kshetrajna* (Knower of the field) and the *kshetra* (field of activities). This union is like that of the rope and the snake. One is the Truth, and the other is an imposition on that Truth. Lord Krishna says *he alone sees who sees the imperishable in the perishable*. And the one who sees the Supreme Soul equally in all does not destroy himself. The Upanishads say that those who do not know about the Soul kill themselves. What they imply is that the ignorant take up bodies and become 'doers'. They accumulate merits and demerits through their actions and experience the consequences of them, and as the *karma* finishes, they shed the body to take up another to shed it again based on time, merits and demerits. For the wise, however, it is called the last death.

***Being born again, dying again, and lying in the mother's womb  
over and over again, this *samsara* is extremely difficult to cross.  
Save me, O Lord, through your limitless compassion.***

— Bhaja govindam, sung by Adi Shankara

Having learnt about *Purusha* and *prakriti* in detail, we must know that we are the Soul, the witness who does nothing. All actions are performed by *prakriti*. Those who see all the names and forms and understand they are from one Supreme Source — *Brahman*, as a result of their knowledge, attain the Supreme.

Lord Krishna briefs once again about the incomprehensible *Brahman*. He says *Brahman* is not born, and that which is not born cannot perish. *Brahman*, without any attributes, cannot taint. It shines through the body but does not attach itself to anything. Lord Krishna compares *Brahman* to space. The space being everywhere is unattached, unaffected and untainted by anything. *Brahman* is compared to light as light illuminates everything and is yet unattached to all that it illuminates. Light does not cause anything to happen and is disassociated from everything that happens under its illumination.

Lord Krishna concludes this chapter by saying that the body and Soul are different and can be known apart only through knowledge. He says the one who sees both the manifestations and the reason for manifestation, which is the unmanifest *maya* (*prakriti*) as non-existent, attains the result of the knowledge — *Brahman*.

## Verses 27 – 35

Lord Krishna said,

***Wherever anything comes into being — the unmoving or the moving, know  
that it is because of the union between the field and the Knower of the field.***  
13.27

***They alone see, who see the Supreme Soul existing equally in all beings, as  
the imperishable within the perishable.*** 13.28

***By seeing the Supreme Soul equally everywhere, one does not destroy the  
Self by the self. Thereby, they attain the supreme goal.*** 13.29

***They alone truly see who knows that all actions are performed by *prakriti*,  
and the embodied Soul does nothing.*** 13.30

***Those who see all diverse forms of life rooted in One, and from That alone  
they are born out of, shall indeed attain the Absolute.*** 13.31

*Without a beginning and devoid of qualities, the Supreme Soul is imperishable. Although situated within the body, neither acts nor is tainted.* 13.32

*Space which beholds everything within it is not tainted because of its subtlety, so is the Soul that pervades the body, not implicated by it.* 13.33

*Just like the one sun illuminating the whole world, so does the Soul illuminate the entire body.* 13.34

*Those who, with the eye of wisdom, distinguish between **kshetra** and **Kshetrajna** and thus liberate beings from **prakriti** attain the Supreme.* 13.35



**Aum Tat Sat**

# Summary

## Part I – Introduction

- *Jnana yoga* (the *yoga* of knowledge) is the direct dedicated effort made to understand the Self. It consists of *Sravana*, *Manana*, *Nididhyasana*
- *Mahavakya* means "The great sayings". The *Mahavakyas* declare that there is no difference between the individual self and the Supreme. E.g.: *Aham Brahmasmi* — I am *Brahman*.

## Part II – Arjuna's Questions

- Arjuna asks Lord Krishna about *Prakriti* (Matter), *Purusha* (Spirit), the *Kshetra* (The Field), the *Kshetrajna* (The Knower of the Field), and *Jnana* (the Knowledge) and *Jneyam* (that which is to be known).
- *Kshetra* means field. Lord Krishna refers to the body as *kshetra* because *kshetra* depletes, can be destroyed, protects, and reaps like our bodies.
- *Kshetrajna* means knower of the *kshetra*. Lord Krishna refers *Kshetrajna* to the Soul.
- The characteristics of the Soul and the body are different. The Soul is the knower, the body is the known, and anything known is *jada*. The Soul is consciousness. The known are many the knower is one. The known is subject to change, and the knower is the unchanging Truth. The known is perishable, the knower is non-perishable. The known has attributes. The knower is attributeless. The known is a delusion. The knower is the Truth.
- Lord Krishna says *Ishvara* is the reason for the world and declares *Ishvara* and the individual are one and the same. The lower nature is the reason for the world. The higher nature is the Ultimate Truth, the bliss and the consciousness — the complete. The lower nature of *Ishvara* is the creator. The higher nature of *Ishvara* is *Brahman*, which is the Soul.
- Lord Krishna says *kshetra* is the lifeless principle, and it exists in two states — the unmanifest and the manifest. *Prakriti* and all its manifestations are *kshetra*.

## Part III – Values

- Humility, modesty, non-violence, forbearing, straightforwardness, service to the *guru*, purity, steadfastness, self-control, dispassion, absence of egotism, understanding the flaws of mortal life, removal of mine-ness, non-clinging, even-mindedness, devotion, solitude, dissociation, contemplation of benefits of the knowledge of the Self and pursuit of the Absolute Truth — I declare them as knowledge. Those which are contrary to these are ignorance.

## Part IV - *ParaBrahman*

- *ParaBrahman* is beginningless, supreme, beyond existence and non-existence.
- The Upanishads use the method of superimposition and negation to describe *Brahman*. Lord Krishna uses the same method to describe *Brahman*. He says the world is superimposed on *Brahman*, and yet, It does not have any relationship with any of the manifestations.

## Part V - The Nature and the Spirit

- *Prakriti*: *Prakriti* means nature in a general term, and according to the Vedas, it is the reason for all manifestations.
- The modified form of *prakriti*, called *vikriti*, is the manifestation. *Prakriti* is the potential in the unmanifest state, which is the cause for manifestations.
- In Vedanta, *Purusha* refers to *Nirguna Brahman*. *Purusha* means one who dwells in the city as a witness without having any relationship with anything. The body is compared to a city. And *Purusha* exists in all beings without having any relationship to the beings.

- *Purusha* and *prakriti* are both *anadi* (beginningless or origin-less). *Purusha* is origin-less as it exists in all three periods of time. *Purusha* is the only Absolute Truth (*Sat*). *Prakriti* is origin-less because it does not have a real existence. *Prakriti* is *asat*.
- The *Purusha* that illuminates *prakriti* exhibits Itself as the *samsari*. The *Purusha* is the awareness in mind, which appears as the *samsari*. When that individual *Purusha* attains knowledge (which is about to be revealed), he attains liberation. One is a *samsari* only until the mind identifies itself as the mind.
- Ignorance is the material cause of *samsara*. The intellectual cause of *samsara* is attachment.
- Sorrow arises out of attachment, and the root cause of attachment is ignorance. If we remove the root cause of sorrow, the consequence of which is attachment, we can remove *samsara*. To remove ignorance, we must attain knowledge.
- The right knowledge of *Purusha* is to understand Him from three different angles, the real nature, *Ishvara*, and Individual Soul.

## Part VI - Conclusion

- Lord Krishna discusses five steps to liberation — *karma yoga*, *upasana*, *sravana*, *manana*, *nididhyasana*.
- Lord Krishna says *he alone sees who sees the imperishable in the perishable*. And the one who sees the Supreme Soul equally in all does not destroy himself.
- Lord Krishna concludes this chapter by saying that the body and Soul are different and can be known apart only through knowledge. He says the one who sees both the manifestations and the reason for manifestation, which is the unmanifest *maya* (*prakriti*) as non-existent attains the result of the knowledge — *Brahman*.



# Chapter 14

## Gunatraya Vibhaaga Yoga



three *Gunas*".

This chapter is dedicated to understanding the *gunas* — the three modes of nature. In this chapter, Lord Krishna details the three *gunas*, their characteristics, and how they bind one. This chapter helps us understand the influence we are under, to take measures to subjugate our detrimental impulses and tendencies to keep ourselves under control and equanimous through life. He concludes this chapter by describing the characteristics of the wise who have crossed all the *gunas*. As this chapter entirely deals with the nature, characteristics, and working of the *gunas*, it is called "*Yoga* of the Division of the



## Part I

# Introduction

In the previous chapter, Lord Krishan talked about *prakriti* and *Purusha* and how they have gotten mixed up. The body and the consciousness are mixed up, and in order to separate them, one must understand *prakriti* in detail.

*Prakriti* is made of the three *gunas* - the three modes of nature: *sattva guna* — the quality of awareness, *rajas guna* — the quality of passion and action, and *tamas guna* — the quality of ignorance and dullness.

The entire creation is the manifestation of *maya*. If *maya* is made of the three *gunas*, then everything made from *maya* also has the three *gunas*. *Maya* is not independent but dependent on the *Purusha*. An individual embodied soul (*jiva*) is a *samsari* because of its attachment to the *gunas*. To remove *maya* one must understand the three *gunas* and cross them one by one.

Lord Krishna begins this chapter by telling Arjuna that He will teach him the Supreme knowledge again. He also talks about the glory of knowledge and the fruits one attains from it. Lord Krishna refers to the knowledge of the Self as Supreme for two reasons below:

1. The object of knowledge is superior to anything else.
2. One attains the highest only through this knowledge.

No other knowledge will yield any result just by attaining it. For instance, knowing how to cook will not remove one's hunger. But knowing the Self removes *samsara*. The knowledge of the Self is experiential.

Lord Krishna says the renunciants have attained the highest by understanding the *gunas* and differentiating the Self from them. They have been able to renounce, seek and liberate themselves because of this knowledge. He says one indeed attains liberation as a fruit of knowledge that cannot be attained even during the dissolution of the entire universe.

Lord Krishna reiterates that He is both the material cause and the intellectual cause for all that is born. He declares that as a father, He casts His seeds in the womb, which is *prakriti* (the material nature), from the embryo of which all beings are created.

### The knowledge of the Self is supreme because

The object of knowledge is superior to anything else.

One attains the highest only through this knowledge.

## Verses 1 – 4

Lord Krishna said,

*I will again explain to you that Supreme knowledge, the best of all knowledge by knowing which, all the sages have attained the highest perfection. 14.1*

*Those who take refuge in this knowledge will attain My nature. There will be no rebirth at the time of the creation of the universe nor destruction at the time of its dissolution for them. 14.2*

*The material nature (**prakriti**) is the womb; in that, I place the seed — the individual consciousness. All beings are born manifested by Me. 14.3*

*For whatever forms are generated in any womb, material nature (**prakriti**) is their womb, and I am the seed-bestowing Father. 14.4*



## Part II

# Gunas

Lord Krishna begins His discourse on *gunas* by discussing six important topics:

1. The characteristics of the *gunas*.
2. The ways in which different *gunas* bind one.
3. The dominance of one *guna* over the others.
4. The distinguished signs that reveal one's predominant *guna*.
5. The path one takes after death based on one's *guna*.
6. The result one attains from different *gunas* in this world.

When we say *prakriti* (*maya*) is made up of all the three *gunas*, it is made of the object *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* and not the attributes of these *gunas*. From the respective objects of *maya*, the respective attributes arise. From the object *sattva* of *maya*, the qualities that arise are called the *sattva guna*. Similarly, the attributes that arise from the object *rajas* are called the *rajas guna*, and so are for *tamas*. An object, for instance, a flower, can be compared to the object *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Its attributes like the colour, texture, and smell can be compared to the *sattva guna*, *rajas guna* and *tamas guna*. Our discussion, going forward, will be about the attributes of the *gunas* and not the object itself.

From *prakriti*, the five subtle primordial elements arise, and from them, the gross primordial elements. Arising from *prakriti*, they both have the *gunas*.

### The characteristics of the *gunas* and the ways different *gunas* bind one

*Sattvic guna* is the power to know (*jnana shakti*), *rajas guna* is the power to act (*kriya shakti*), and *tamas guna* is the power to be inactive (*jada shakti*). The common characteristic of all the three *gunas* is that they bind one. They bind one to the body.

### The king who got lost in the forest

After getting separated from his army, a king was once lost in a forest. He was very hungry and thirsty but found nothing to eat or drink. Roaming in the forest that was notorious for its beasts by himself, he found a hut. It was filthy, and it stank. But to protect himself, he knocked at the door. A limp old man opened the door, and the king pleaded with him to let him stay. The old man agreed under one condition that the king must leave the hut immediately after the next sunrise, to which the king agreed. The following day the old man made the king some porridge. Having eaten after long starvation, the king got attached to its taste. He refused to leave the hut.

This story tells us how we enter our bodies without wanting to, like the king entering the house, because of our *karma* to work out our *karmas*, finishing which we must leave. However, without realizing why we are here and for what, we are attached to the body itself. The three *gunas* are the reason for our attachment. They bind us to the body. And when one thinks he is the body, he takes up the body as his own, and their actions become his, and he owns the fruits of the actions.

### The characteristics of *sattva guna*

**Illumination:** The *sattva guna* illuminates everything like the light. When one is in pure *sattva* without the contamination of *rajas* and *tamas gunas*, he attains the correct knowledge of everything. The *tamas* and *rajas gunas* hinder one's comprehension, and so in their dominance, one gains contrary knowledge about everything.

**Free from evil or diseases:** *Sattvic guna* is harmless, so one will not fall because of a predominant *sattva guna*. Like the body, the mind has its diseases like anger, greed, jealousy, lust etc. These diseases, however, arise out of *rajas* and *tamas guna* only. The mind is pure in *sattva*, suppressing *rajas* and *tamas*. *Sattvic guna* will not harm anyone, though it also binds.

**How does *sattva guna* bind one?**

One's path is to move out of *tamas* to *rajas* and ascend to *sattva*. However, the ultimate goal is to cross *sattva guna* also, even though it is the closest to liberation. *Sattvic guna* binds one to happiness and knowledge.

**Attachment to happiness:** When one is in *sattva guna*, it will bring him peace of mind, mental clarity and intellectual comprehension.

When one possesses values like dispassion, charity, discrimination, and peace, one is happy and content. *Sattvic guna* binds one to the tranquillity he attains by being in *sattva guna* without letting him cross over. However, the *sattva guna* does not eliminate the ego (*ahamkara*). Instead, it derives joy because of the "I-ness" in one's actions. One becomes happy to give because he attains pleasure by thinking he gives. It is a joy from the ego. One must let go of the pleasure of being in *sattva guna* to experience higher joy. One cannot cross over if one gets addicted to the peace of *sattva guna*.

The more *sattva guna* one has, the calmer the mind becomes. And the calmer the mind, the more bliss it reflects of the Soul. With increased *sattva guna*, one experiences the reflected bliss in his mind. Though blissful, the joy of the mind is still external. The *sattva guna* will keep us entangled in the *anandamaya khosa* (the sheath of bliss).

**Attachment to knowledge:** Those in *sattva guna* are attached to knowledge, and any amount of knowledge will not satiate them. To be liberated, adequate knowledge of the Self is enough. Knowledge of all the scriptures is not required. With the attained knowledge, one must meditate on it and realize the Self. *Sattvic* keeps one longing for more knowledge, which is a barrier. The *sattva guna* keeps one entangled in *vijnanamaya khosa* (the sheath of wisdom).

The one who has crossed over *sattva guna* is content with everything. The Self, free from all attachment, is attached to happiness and knowledge, which are the attributes of the mind of material nature. The Self becomes bound by identifying with the joy of matter because of the *sattva guna*. The *sattva* binds one to the world and hinders one from breaking away from this petty joy.

**The characteristics of *rajas guna***

**Passion:** The power to desire and act comes from one's *rajas guna*. The nature of *rajas guna* is desire and attachment, because of which it instigates one into action. Because of *rajas guna*, one desires the objects he does not possess and builds an attachment to those he already has. Those in *rajas guna* are attached to people and objects. *Rajas guna* make one dependent on everything one is attached to.

**Instigates all into actions:** When there is a desire in the mind, it always comes out as action, and if it does not come out as action, it is only because the desire is weak. And when the desire strengthens, the actions will follow. The desires keep building up inside the mind, and when it has accumulated enough strength, they will become actions.

**How does *rajas guna* bind one?**

**Action:** Though the Self does not act, out of *rajas*, one thinks he is the doer and experiences the consequences of his action. Any action has two consequences the visible consequences and the invisible consequences. When one steals from another, the visible consequence is the object moving from one to another. The demerits the stealer accumulates are the invisible consequences. Desire leads to action, which leads to both consequences. One's invisible sins manifest as circumstances for sorrow, and one's invisible merit manifests as circumstances for joy.

*Rajas guna* also causes turbulence in the mind. Because of *rajas guna*, the mind is constantly involved in thoughts (its action). The actions of the mind, speech and body are because of *rajas guna*. *Rajas guna* instigates one's action organs into action and creates self-conceit in them. *Rajas guna* keeps one in *manomaya khosa* and *pranamaya khosa*.

#### The characteristics of *tamas guna*

**Hides:** *Tamas guna* is like the darkness. We will not be able to see any objects in darkness. *Tamas*, like darkness, hides the truth. *Tamas* is a feature of *maya's avarana shakti*, which is the power that veils the real nature of things. *Avarana shakti* is that which hides the rope (the real nature of an object is hidden because of it). *Tamas guna* is born from ignorance.

**Deludes:** *Tamas guna* causes delusion. Delusion cripples one's discrimination capabilities. One will not be able to discriminate between right and wrong under delusion and so will not pursue the right goals in life. Assigning more value to objects or people than required, abandoning duty because they seem burdensome, forgetting one's duties, and getting involved in work one is not qualified for are some consequences of delusion. One under delusion will not have the correct comprehension and will not have the right knowledge.

#### How does *tamas guna* bind one?

**Negligence:** In the predominance of *tamas guna*, one may become negligent towards his duties. One may not be able to calculate the consequences of not doing his duty properly. *Tamas guna* binds one in carelessness and negligence.

**Indolence:** Under the influence of *tamas guna*, one will not have commitment or involvement in his actions. *Tamas guna* binds one by lack of action and involvement.

**Sleep:** Too much sleep is an attribute of *tamas*. *Tamas* binds one through too much sleep, laziness, and carelessness.

	Sattva	Rajas	Tamas
	Power to know	Power to act	Power to be inactive
Characteristics	Illumination Free from evil or diseases	Passion Instigates all into actions	Hides Deludes
Binds through	Attachment to happiness Attachment to knowledge	Action	Negligence Indolence Sleep



## Verses 5 – 9

Lord Krishna said,

*The three **gunas** — goodness, passion and ignorance are born out of **prakriti**. These bind the imperishable consciousness to the body. 14.5*

*Of these, the **sattva guna**, the mode of goodness, the illuminating, free from evil and unblemished, binds one by attachment to happiness and knowledge. 14.6*

*The **rajas guna** — the mode of passion, is the source of desires and attachment; it binds one by attachment to fruitive action. 14.7*

*And the **tamas guna**, born of ignorance, is the cause of delusion in all. It binds by negligence, indolence, and sleep. 14.8*

***Sattvic guna** binds one to happiness, **rajas** to action, while **tamas**, obscuring knowledge, binds one to delusion. 14.9*



### Part III

## The Dominance of *Gunas*

**The dominance of one *guna* over the others**

**How does one *guna* dominate the other *gunas*?**

The mind and body are made of three *gunas*, and the *gunas* are in disequilibrium. According to the scriptures, creation happens because of the disequilibrium of the *gunas*, and when all three *gunas* come to be in equilibrium, it results in dissolution.

At any given time, one *guna* emerges, overpowering the other two *gunas* and does its work. For *sattva guna* to arise, it has to overpower both *rajas guna* and *tamas guna*. Similarly, for the *rajas guna* or *tamas guna* to emerge, they have to overpower the other two *gunas*.

**When does a *guna* get the strength to suppress the other *gunas* and emerge?**

Though the *gunas* bind, they are also necessary. All the *gunas* are required to achieve anything. For instance, if liberation is the goal, *sattva guna* is required to attain knowledge, and *rajas guna* is necessary to perform *karma yoga* and other practices to qualify one for knowledge. *Tamas guna* is required to rest and sleep.

Everyone is born and is in *tamas guna* by nature. One does not have to make an effort to be in *tamas guna*. But to move to *rajas* and *sattva guna*, we must make efforts. The two factors that determine one's *guna* at any particular time are:

1. One's nature (*gunas*) / tendencies.
2. One's actions

**1. One's nature (*gunas*)/ tendencies:** Our nature determines our actions. For instance, if we are in *sattva guna*, we will be involved in *sattvic* activities. Similarly, if we are in *rajas guna* and *tamas guna*, we will be involved in *rajasic* and *tamasic* activities, respectively. All actions have consequences. Along with visible consequences, they also create invisible consequences, which are the merits and demerits. The fruits of any action get exhausted only after manifesting their merits or demerits as joy or sorrow for the doer.

**How can one experience the merits and demerits accumulated by one's actions?**

To experience joy and sorrow, one must be in the right world, in a suitable body, and in the right relationships. Only if all three criteria match will one have the circumstances to experience the fruits of one's actions. The relationships and the circumstances last only as long as one is entitled to the pleasure or pain from it — only until the merits or demerits pertaining to that experience last. Once the merits or demerits are exhausted by experiencing them, the relationship or circumstance will not last any further.

We earn our gross and subtle bodies as a result of our actions from many lifetimes. The nature of the body and the mind are different for all individuals. Our repeated traits in many lifetimes become our tendencies in the current birth. Some, by nature, are born with *sattvic* attributes like peace, giving, and dispassion. Similarly, some individuals are born with more *rajasic* attributes like greed and anger and yet others with predominant *tamas guna*. *Sattvic guna*, *rajas guna*, and *tamas gunas* come out at times because of one's

*karma*.

**2. One's actions:** One's actions through the body and the mind determine the *guna* that will arise in him. One's thoughts, actions, food (quantity and quality), reading and listening choices determine the *guna* that will subsequently predominate him.

And at times, when our natural tendencies manifest, we may find ourselves dominated by one of the *gunas* even without any effort or action. The *guna* that dominates at any given time can either be from one's immediate actions or one's nature. No one can know for certain from which of the two factors the *guna* arises at a particular time. However, when one is in the clutches of lower *gunas* like *tamas* and *rajas*, he must try to bring himself to *sattva guna* while accepting the consequences of the lower *gunas*.

**The two factors that determine one's guna at any particular time are**

One's nature (gunas) / tendencies

One's actions

**The distinguished signs that reveal one's predominant *guna***

Though all three *gunas* influence one, and each *guna* arises over the other throughout the day, a person is predominantly in one *guna* most of the time. The *guna* one is in most of the time is referred to as one's *guna*.

**The distinguishing signs of *sattva guna***

Lord Krishna says when the light of awareness illuminates one through all his sense organs, he is said to be in *sattva guna*. Lord Krishna refers to the sense organs (the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin) as the gates of the body, as it is through them one attains information about this world. When the instrument of knowledge — the five sense organs carry the right knowledge, then one is in *sattva guna*. Through *sattva*, one attains the right comprehension and makes the right judgments about everything around him.

One will be able to uphold the values only when he is in *sattva guna*. Values like dispassion, calm, and truthfulness will be present in one only when he is in *sattva guna*. We adhere to the values only when we are in *sattva guna*, and we are in *sattva guna* only when we adhere to the values. Attaining values, attaining knowledge or doing spiritual practices is due to *sattva guna*. In general, when there is inner harmony, tranquillity, and clarity, we are in *sattva guna*.

**The distinguishing signs of *rajas guna***

**Greed:** Greed is an attribute of *rajas guna*. Greed manifests as a lack of contentment, desire for other's property, attachment to one's possession and inability to let go. It is the desire to want more and the attachment to objects and people.

**Activity:** *Ragas guna* instigates one into inordinate activities for material pursuits. It pushes one into performing actions with selfish desires, activities that do not fulfil one in any way, or actions that are not required. It pushes one into taking up unnecessary responsibility.

On a mental level, it keeps one in a whirlpool of thoughts. It attacks one with thoughts, leaving him confused and incapable of meditating. Useless and non-focused thoughts, violence towards others, non-forgiving, and pride are all attributes of *rajas guna*.

**The distinguishing signs of *tamas guna***

**Miscomprehension:** *Tamas guna* is the quality of dullness. Under the influence of *tamas guna*, one's comprehension ability will be depleted. One will be deluded, and

the delusion clouds the right knowledge and truth about the objects around him. The mind and the intellect will be confused and unable to function well.

**Inertia:** One will lack action and will not be able to achieve any goal when one is in *tamas guna*.

**Carelessness:** *Tamas guna* manifests as a lack of alertness. The mind under *tamas guna* will not be able to calculate the consequence of any action performed, not performed or performed imperfectly. Under the influence of *tamas guna*, the mind will not be able to value anything correctly. The mind will either assign too much value to something or may undervalue it. Other manifestations of *tamas guna* are oversleeping, laziness, and dullness of the intellect.

With the distinguishing signs mentioned, one can identify the *guna* he is in at any given time. Having identified the *guna* one is in, he must try to advance to a better *guna* through practice.

### The distinguished signs that reveal one's predominant guna

Sattva	Rajas	Tamas
Awareness	Greed	Miscomprehension
Illumination	Over Activity	Inertia
Knowledge		Carelessness
Tranquility		
Clarity		

### How can one advance from one *guna* to another?

When we say someone is in *sattva guna*, he is predominantly in *sattva guna*, but he also moves to *rajas* and *tamas guna*. All the *gunas* are necessary. We require *tamas guna* for sleep, *rajas* for actions, maintaining our body, and *sattva* to attain knowledge and meditation.

All the *gunas* bind one, but the sorrow from *rajas* and *tamas* is very little for the one in *sattva guna*. The *rajas* and *tamas* cannot bind one who has crossed over them. Also, the bondage of *sattva* is better than the bondage of the other two *gunas*, and the bondage of *rajas* is better than the bondage of *tamas*. The suffering from the bondage of *sattva* is lesser than that of the others. The bondage or the consequences of *tamas guna* is adverse. One must cross over to the higher *gunas* to suffer less.

### Crossing over *tamas guna*

Though *sattva guna* is better of all, one cannot directly move to *sattva* from *tamas*. One will not succeed if one tries to move up to *sattva guna* directly from *tamas*. For instance, if one tries *sattvic* practices like meditation from *tamas guna*, he will fall asleep. This is because one in *tamas* will not have enough power to cross over to *sattva*. Therefore, the path to *sattva* is only through *rajas*. One must take up practices to first reach *rajas guna*.

### Practices to reach *rajas guna* from *tamas guna*

While in *tamas*, one should look for *rajas* activities backed up with *sattva guna*. The *sattva guna* in these activities is the right attitude. One in *tamas guna* must get involved in good activities with the right attitude. These kinds of *rajas* activities are called *karma*

*yoga*. In short, *karma yoga* is the way out of *tamas guna*.

*Karma yoga* brings one out of delusion, carelessness, and laziness. If one does not do actions the right way, he will become lazy and ignorant even without knowing. For the mind and the body to function well, everybody should be involved in *karma yoga*. In all the scriptures, *karma yoga* is the first step towards progress because most people are in *tamas guna* most of the time.

#### **Some immediate ways to come out of *tamas guna***

At times we are in *tamas guna* out of habit. When we work hard, we also need enough rest. However, oversleeping is *tamas guna*. To immediately overcome sleep, we can perform certain actions like breathing practices, walking, bathing or other enjoyable tasks. Association with good people can help overcome *tamas guna* steadily. Those who have crossed over to *sattva guna* can be alone, but those in *tamas guna* will go further into *tamas* if they are alone. A company of good people is necessary for *tamasic* people. Right food in the right quantity helps overcome *tamas guna*. Carelessness, an attribute of *tamas guna*, must be overcome by contemplating the consequences of carelessness.

#### **Crossing over *rajas guna***

Those in *rajas guna* are always in action, amidst responsibility; therefore, they will not be able to meditate or attain the right knowledge. From *rajas*, one must take the help of *sattva guna* and move to *sattva guna*. The means to achieve *sattva guna* is to take up contrary actions to one's shortcomings. For example, greed is an attribute of *rajas guna*, and the contrary action would be to involve in charity. *Rajas guna* binds us through attachment to objects we possess. To break the attachment and let go, we must practice giving.

One must give up some responsibilities to calm the body and perform practices like meditation and *japa* to calm the mind down.

When one crosses from *tamas* to *rajas*, the mind gets purer, and when one crosses from *rajas* to *sattva*, the mind becomes persistent. When the mind is made ready by performing *karma yoga* and meditation, one can enter *jnana yoga* — the *yoga* of knowledge.

## **Verses 10 – 13**

Lord Krishna said,

*Sattvic prevails, overpowering rajas and tamas, rajas prevails, overpowering sattva and tamas, and tamas prevails, overpowering sattva and rajas.* 14.10

*When the light of intelligence shines through all the gates of the body, then know that the sattva guna that is dominant.* 14.11

*When greed, activity, restlessness, and longingness arise, know that the rajas guna is predominant.* 14.12

*When darkness, inertness, miscomprehension, and delusion arise, then the tamas guna that is predominant.* 14.13



## Part IV

# The Path

### The path one takes after death based on one's *guna*

Lord Krishna talks about the path one takes after death based on one's *guna*. In earlier chapters, Lord Krishna discussed the path one takes based on one's actions. In general, one's path after death and rebirth is believed to be determined by one's actions. How, then, does *guna* influence one's path after death?

*Guna* is responsible for one's path after death because the *guna* dictates one's actions. In simple terms, one's nature influences one's actions. *Guna* is the reason for action and the actions for the path. Therefore, the predominant *guna* determines the next birth for the individual.

#### When one passes on by being in *sattva guna*, predominantly

Those who have won over *tamas* and *rajas guna* and moved to *sattva guna* will attain higher worlds devoid of sorrow which the great beings and the *yogis* occupy. And when one is reborn in this world, he gets a noble birth in a good family and favourable circumstances that will help him develop good traits and adhere to righteousness. His efforts towards liberation will not go to waste. He will be in a circumstance where he will be able to continue his endeavours towards liberation.

The right circumstances are essential to achieve anything. Those who have already struggled and come up to *sattva guna* will not have to struggle again for the right circumstances to pursue the spiritual path. They will be granted one. Being in the right circumstance, they will finish their tendencies (*vasanas*) for *sattva* and try harder to cross *sattva* also.

#### When one passes on by being in *rajas guna*, predominantly

Those who have won over *tamas guna* and moved to *rajas guna* but have not crossed over *rajas* to *sattva* attain a birth with a lot of responsibilities. They will be born into circumstances where they will have to work hard to meet their needs or their families. They may be born into impoverished conditions or families with huge responsibilities.

These circumstances are earned through one's own tendencies to fulfil their tendencies. If one is in a situation where there is a constant need to work, he must accept them and use them as opportunities to perform *karma yoga*. By doing one's work as *karma yoga*, one will be able to remove his tendencies and progress further. By delivering one's responsibilities correctly, he will eventually start to desire peace and move towards *sattva guna* from *rajas guna*. However, in such situations, if one is unwilling and unaccepting of his responsibilities, he will degrade to *tamas guna* quickly.

#### When one passes on by being in *tamas guna*, predominantly

Those who leave their bodies by being in *tamas guna* predominantly, will be born among irrational beings like animals or plants. Being born there, they will be able to fulfil their tendencies.



### The path one takes after death based on one's guna

Sattva	Goes to higher worlds devoid of sorrow which the great beings and the yogis occupy Is reborn in a noble birth in a good family & circumstances conducive to growth.
Rajas	Attains a birth with a lot of responsibilities.
Tamas	Born among the realm of irrational beings like animals or plants.

## Verses 14 – 15

Lord Krishna said,

*When the embodied being transitions with a predominance of **sattva guna**, he attains the pure abodes of the knower of the highest.* 14.14

*By succumbing to death with predominant **rajas guna**, one is born among those attached to action. Similarly, dying in **tamas guna**, one is born in the womb of the irrational.* 14.15

Having talked about what happens after death, Lord Krishna talks about the consequences of being in each **guna** when one is alive — the result one attains from different **gunas** in this world. From **sattva guna**, out of awareness and correct knowledge arises **sattvic** actions which yield merits. Merits manifest as comfort and joy in his lifetime.

From **rajas guna** comes **rajasic** action. The attributes of **rajas guna** — desire, greed, attachment, and jealousy, arise actions that are driven by selfishness, leading to violence and harm to others. The fruits of such actions are demerits. The demerits manifest as sorrow and discomfort in one's life.

**Tamas guna**, which results in **tamasic** actions that may not directly result in merits or demerits, will often be the reason for demerits. The lack of action or useless actions results in wasting time, further drawing one into **tamas guna**, keeping him ignorant and deluded.

The result one gets from moving up to **sattva guna** is correct knowledge. Being predominantly in **rajas guna** brings one greed. By staying in the **tamas**, one becomes careless, prone to mistakes, and more ignorant. Therefore, those in **sattva guna** progress and those in the **rajas guna** remain in between, and those in the **tamas guna** fall further.

## Verses 16 – 18

Lord Krishna said,

*The result of actions performed in the mode of **sattvic** bestows pure results. The fruit of **rajas** is misery, and ignorance is the fruit of **Tamas**.* 14.16

*From **sattva guna** arises wisdom, from **rajas** greed, and from **tamas** arises ignorance, negligence and delusion.* 14.17

*Those abiding in **sattvic** go upwards, those in **rajas** remain in the middle, and those in **tamas guna** go downwards.* 14.18



## Part V

# Transcending *Sattvic Guna*

## Crossing over *sattva guna*

*Karma yoga* is the means to cross over *tamas guna*, and meditation practices are the means to cross over *rajas guna*. Even though *sattva guna* is necessary to attain the knowledge of the Self and is the best among the *gunas*, it still binds, causes sorrow and is responsible for *samsara*. One must cross over *sattva* also to be liberated after attaining the knowledge of the Self.

Lord Krishna says the means to cross over *sattva guna* is by obtaining the knowledge of the truth and the delusion. Those who attain such profound wisdom and standstill on it will not be bound by *sattva guna* also.

## The truth and the delusion

Everything created is the manifestation of *maya*. The consciousness of *Brahman* is reflected in the intellect, and it attains consciousness that the other *jada* (lifeless) manifestations do not. Having attained *Brahman's* consciousness, the intellect divides itself from the world. The subject-object division occurs. The subject is that which experiences and the object is that which is experienced. The body that has consciousness thinks of itself as the subject and experiences all the objects. All the manifestations come out only from *maya* and, therefore, the divisions which appear to be subject and object are all *maya*, not different from one another. It is only *maya*, and only *maya* transacts with *maya*. The *gunas* transact with the *gunas*.

When one dreams, the entire material of the dream comes out of one's memory. The dreamer is also projected by himself in his dream. The dreamer and all other objects within the dream are just thoughts. However, even when they are just thoughts, the dreamer differentiates himself from the other objects. In dreams, one thought interacts with other thoughts. The one awake is the witness of his dreams. The cosmos is often compared to the dream of the creator. The *maya* is the mind of the creator. *Maya* divides itself into two — as the experiencer and the experienced, and it transacts with one and other. The experiencer and the experience are both only the *gunas*, as *maya* is made of the *gunas*. The *gunas* that have taken the form of the mind and body are the experiencer, and it experiences (indulges) in *gunas*. The *guna* then experiences the fruits of its action. The *samsara* is from *guna* for *guna*. The Self is outside of it. The wise know that the doer is none other than the *gunas*, and he sees himself apart from the *gunas*. With the knowledge of *gunas*, one crosses *sattva guna* also. He attains *Brahman*. He becomes *Brahma Swaroopa* (the form of *Brahman*). One is liberated by crossing all the *gunas* and is free from all sorrows.

## Crossing over the gunas



Lord Krishna says that it is the *gunas* that are responsible for the creation of bodies. *Gunas* are the reason for the birth because they induce different desires in one. The desires provoke one into different actions. All actions produce two types of consequences, visible and invisible consequences. The invisible consequences, the merits and demerits, give their fruits as visible consequences, like circumstances for joy or sorrow. To experience joy or sorrow, a birth (physical body) is required. The body and the circumstances that we are in have been earned through our actions. The merits and the demerits are because of actions, the actions are because of desires, and the desires are because of nature (*gunas*). This is the *samsara*, and this is how the *gunas* bind us. Only those who cross over all *gunas* cross birth, death, old age and sorrow. There is no rebirth for the *yogi* who crosses the *guna*. He attains a deathless state.

## Verses 19 – 20

Lord Krishna said,

*When the embodied being knows that there is none other except the *gunas* that are impetus to all actions and the Supreme transcendental to them, attain My divine nature. 14.19*

*By transcending the three *gunas* which cause the body, one becomes free from birth, death, old age, and misery and attains immortality. 14.20*



## Part VI

# The Wise

## Verse 21

Arjuna said,

*What are the characteristics of those who have gone beyond the three **gunas**? What is his conduct? How do they go beyond the bondage of the **gunas**? 14.21*

In reply to Arjuna, Lord Krishna describes the wise who have crossed all **gunas**.

### The wise

Lord Krishna says the wise are also in **sattva guna**, except they are not bound by it. When one is predominantly in **tamas guna**, he will be attacked by it. He will experience sorrow from it. However, he will not experience the sorrow of **rajas** and **sattva guna**. When one is in **rajas guna**, he experiences the sorrow of **rajas guna**. Because he has crossed over **tamas guna**, he will not experience suffering from **tamas guna**. Also, not having reached **sattva guna**, he will not experience sorrow from **sattva guna**. Similarly, those in **sattva** will not be affected much by the sorrow of **rajas** and **tamas guna**. They will be bound by **sattva guna** and suffer from the sorrows of **sattva guna** only. Everybody is predominantly in one **guna**, and they experience sorrow from that **guna**, and the other **guna's** shortcomings will not affect them much.

The one who has crossed over all the **gunas** is in **sattva** predominantly and will experience all three **gunas** without experiencing their bondage. They have removed the sorrow from all three **gunas**.

The wise cannot be in **tamas guna** predominantly as **sattva guna** is required to attain the knowledge of the Self. Only by being in **sattva** can he attain knowledge and standstill in it.

### The wise are not affected by the **gunas**

All thoughts can be divided into **sattvic**, **rajasic**, or **tamasic**. Good thoughts, for example, thoughts leading to forgiveness, are **sattvic**. Thoughts of action and greed are **rajasic**. Confusion and carelessness are **tamasic**.

We rejoice in certain thoughts and despise others. The reason thoughts attack us is because of the attachment and aversion towards them. We experience comfort or sorrow from our thoughts because the mind from which the thought arises is taken as oneself. The thought in mind is not differentiated from oneself. We do not see the gap or difference between the mind and the "I".

When they perceive the **gunas** in their mind, the wise just observe them without prejudices and agitations. They understand the mind made from **maya**, from its three **gunas**, will be subjected to their influences. The wise watch their mind as an outside object. The thoughts in them do not disturb them. Like an ocean that is turbulent only on the surface and still inside, the wise have attained a deep state of peace that is not visible to others which only they experience.

Those who have crossed over all the **gunas** have removed themselves from their minds. They do not have any attachment or aversions to any thoughts that cross their

mind. The wise experience thoughts arising from the *gunas* but are not affected by them.

**Steady in wisdom:** Having crossed over all the *gunas*, the wise sit unconcerned about the play of the *gunas*. They do not get entangled with the *gunas* or their fruits. They are not affected by the good or the bad the *gunas* bring. Their wisdom is unshaken under all circumstances. They stand still in steady wisdom about the truth that the Self is beyond the *gunas* and that they are beyond the mind and the body. They are content with themselves.

**Equal regard:** They regard everything alike. Through wisdom, they have attained an insight that shows them the similarity in differences. A child, out of ignorance, may not differentiate between a rock and a piece of gold. But for the wise, because of wisdom, they are the same. They see the difference at the transactional level, but they have the wisdom that allows them to see the substratum of everything, which is the same.

Different objects like pots and bowls made from the same clay appear as different objects for all. The wise will be able to see the difference in the form and, at the same time, see the underlying substance, which is the same, the clay. They see both the transactional reality and, because of their higher comprehension, the Ultimate Reality. There is no contradiction in their knowledge, even though they have two views.

They know that dualities like praise, slander, joy, sorrow, pain, and pleasure are all subject to change and will not be affected by them. Even though they may experience them, they will not give reality to them, knowing they are just transactional experiences. Lord Krishna says having abandoned actions motivated by desire, the wise have risen above the *gunas*.

## Verses 22 – 25

Lord Krishna said,

*Those transcendental to the three *gunas* neither hate illumination (the effect of *sattva*), activity (the effect of *rajas*) or delusion (the effect of *tamas*) in their mind when these are present, nor do they long for them when they are absent.*

14.22

*They remain firmly seated like the unconcerned, unperturbed by the *gunas*, knowing that it is only the *gunas* that are engaged. They stay established in the Self without wavering.*

14.23

*Those who are alike in pleasure and pain, to whom a clod of earth, stone and gold are equal, to whom the pleasant and the unpleasant are alike, those who accept both censure and praise; those who remain the same in honour and dishonour; those for whom both the friend and foe are alike; and those who have abandoned all the undertakings are said to have risen above the three *gunas*.*

14.24- 14.25

Lord Krishna concludes this chapter by emphasising devotion to crossover the *gunas*. It is not easy to maintain a steady, effortless contemplation on *Brahman* all the time to realise the Self. It is, however, much easier to show devotion to a form and dedicate all work in service to that form. One will progress gradually through everyday activities by calming the mind and rendering the mind fit to comprehend *Brahman*. Lord Krishna emphasises undivided devotion and says such devotees become *Brahman* — the indestructible deathless state, which is the goal of *jnana yoga*.

## Verses 26 – 27

Lord Krishna said,

*Those who serve me with unswerving devotion rise above the three **gunas** and qualify for realising the **Brahman**.* 14.26

*I am the abode of **Brahman**, the immortal and the imperishable, of everlasting righteousness and Absolute Bliss.* 14.27



**Aum Tat Sat**



# Summary

## Part I – Introduction

- Lord Krishna begins this chapter by telling Arjuna that He will teach him the Supreme knowledge again.
- He also talks about the glory of knowledge and the fruits one attains from it.
- Lord Krishna refers to the knowledge of the Self as Supreme for two reasons: The object of knowledge is superior to anything else, and one attains the highest only through this knowledge.

## Part II – *Gunas*

- From *prakriti*, the five subtle primordial elements arise, and from them, the gross primordial elements. Arising from *prakriti*, they both have the *gunas*.
- *Sattvic guna* is the power to know (*jnana shakti*), *rajas guna* is the power to act (*kriya shakti*), and *tamas guna* is the power to be inactive (*jada shakti*). The common characteristic of all the three *gunas* is that they bind one.
- The characteristics of *sattva guna* are illumination and freedom from evil or diseases.
- *Sattva guna* binds one by attaching one to happiness and knowledge.
- The characteristics of *rajas guna* is passion and instigation into actions.
- *Rajas guna* binds one through actions.
- The characteristics of *tamas guna* are hiding and delusion.
- *Tamas guna* binds one through negligence, indolence, and sleep.

## Part III – The Dominance of *Gunas*

- The two factors that determine one's *guna* at any particular time are one's nature (*gunas*)/ tendencies and one's actions.
- In general, when there is inner harmony, tranquillity, and clarity, we are in *sattva guna*.
- Excessive actions, greed, useless and non-focused thinking, violence towards others, non-forgiving, and pride are all attributes of *rajas guna*.
- Miscomprehension, inertia, carelessness, oversleeping, laziness, and dullness of the intellect are the attributes of *tamas guna*.
- Though *sattva guna* is better of all, one cannot directly move to *sattva* from *tamas*. One must take up practices to first reach *rajas guna*.
- *Karma yoga* is the way out of *tamas guna*.
- Performing contrary action to the attributes of *rajas guna*, meditation, *japa*, calming the mind, and giving up some responsibilities are the ways out of *rajas guna*.

## Part IV – The Path

- Those who have won over *tamas* and *rajas guna* and moved to *sattva guna* will attain higher worlds devoid of sorrow, which the great beings and the *yogis* occupy. When he is reborn in this world, he gets a noble birth in a good family and favourable circumstances that will help him develop good traits and adhere to righteousness.
- Those who have won over *tamas guna* and moved to *rajas guna* but have not crossed over *rajas* to *sattva* attain a birth with a lot of responsibilities. They will be born into circumstances where they will have to work hard to meet their needs or their families.

- Those who leave their bodies by being in *tamas guna* predominantly will be born among irrational beings like animals or plants. Being born there, they will be able to fulfil their tendencies.

#### **Part V – Transcending *Sattvic Guna***

- Lord Krishna says the means to cross over *sattva guna* is by obtaining the knowledge of the truth and delusion. Those who attain such profound wisdom and standstill in it will not be bound by *sattva guna* also.
- The Self is outside of it. The wise know that the doer is none other than the *gunas*, and he sees himself apart from the *gunas*. With the knowledge of *gunas*, one crosses *sattva* also.

#### **Part VI - The Wise**

- Lord Krishna says the wise are also in *sattva guna*, except they are not bound by it.
- The one who has crossed over all the *gunas* is in *sattva* predominantly and will experience all three *gunas* without experiencing their bondage. They have removed the sorrow from all three *gunas*.
- Those who have crossed over all the *gunas* have removed themselves from the mind. They do not have any attachment or aversions to any thoughts that cross their mind. The wise experience thoughts arising from the *gunas* but are not affected by them.
- The wise do not give reality to dualities. They have crossed dualities.
- Lord Krishna concludes this chapter by emphasising devotion to crossover the *gunas*.
- Lord Krishna emphasises undivided devotion and says such devotees become *Brahman* — the indestructible deathless state, which is the goal of *jnana yoga*.

# Chapter 15

## Purushottama Yoga



*Purushottam Yoga* — the *yoga* of the Supreme Being is the essence of the Upanishads. This short yet profound chapter contains the most confidential and sacred knowledge of the Vedic scripture. This chapter details the fundamental philosophy of the Upanishads, which is "*Brahman Satyam Jagat Mithya*" — *Brahman* is the truth, and the world is a delusion. In this chapter, Lord Krishna compares the material world to a peepal tree and discusses *samsara*, delusion, and ignorance in comparison with it. He explains in detail the relationship between Absolute Consciousness and the individual soul. He concludes the chapter by differentiating the perishable from the imperishable and explaining the eternal — the *Purushottama*.



## Part I

# Introduction

The chapter discusses one of the most fundamental and perhaps most important concepts of the Vedas — "*Brahman Satyam Jagat Mithya*." It means *Brahman* is the truth, and the world is a delusion. For this reason, this chapter is, considered the essence of the Upanishads. Lord Krishna explains in detail the nature of *samsara* to emphasise that the world is a delusion (*jagat mithya*). Some scriptures, including Gita, expound on *samsara* in detail for the following reasons:

1. **To understand *samsara*:** The world is beautiful only until one understands its true nature, and when one does, one will no longer be attached to it.
2. **To attain dispassion:** As we derive pleasure from the world, we will not be able to renounce it just by understanding its transient nature. We get caught up in its delusion by enjoying its pleasures and lose our wisdom in it. It is essential to practice seeing the flaws and knowing they will not last forever and that they eventually lead to sorrow. One must ideally meditate on death, disease, flaws and other sorrows to attain dispassion.
3. **To understand that *Brahman* is the substratum for *samsara*:** Knowing the seat of *samsara*, we must attain the knowledge of *Brahman*.

Lord Krishna compares all manifestations to a peepal tree. The comparison of *samsara* to a peepal tree is common in the scriptures. In Sanskrit, the peepal tree is called *ashvattha*. *Shvattha* means what remains tomorrow, and *ashvattha* means that which does not remain tomorrow (perishable).

Lord Krishna compares the tree's roots to *Brahman*, the branches to the body (the five primordial elements) and the leaves to the *Karma kanda* of the Vedas. Lord Krishna refers to *Brahman* as the superior most of them all because:

1. **Subtle:** The roots, which are the foundation of the tree, cannot be seen. They cannot be perceived by the senses when we look at the tree. *Brahman* is subtle and cannot be perceived by the senses like the roots, even though It is the basis for all.
2. **Reason:** The "reason" (*karana*) for anything is superior to its "cause" (*kariya*). *Brahman* is the reason for everything. The roots are the reason for the tree.
3. **Always existent:** *Brahman* is always existent, and this is superior (though not applicable for the root)
4. **The Ultimate Truth:** The truth is that which exists in all three periods of time without undergoing any change. *Brahman* is the Ultimate Truth and is superior.

All manifestations are supported by *Brahman* with Its power — *maya*. Lord Krishna calls the branches (which are compared to the body) inferior because:

1. **Gross:** The branches can be perceived by the senses. Anything made of the five primordial elements can be perceived by the sense organs, and that which has come to manifestation is inferior.

2. **Cause:** The manifestations are the cause. The reason is superior, and the cause is inferior.
3. **Transient:** The cause is not always existent. The cause that has a beginning will also have an ending. It will eventually be destroyed.
4. **Delusion:** The cause is just a form.

Brahman	All Manifestations
Subtle	Gross
Reason	Cause
Always existent	Transient
The Ultimate Truth	Delusion

Lord Krishna declares the tree as *avyayam* — which means eternal. The scriptures talk about two types of eternal. They are:

1. **The eternal that never changes:** The Absolute eternal. The only example of this eternal is *Brahman*.
2. **The eternal that is always present but changes.** This is not an Absolute eternal. An example would be a river. The water appears to be always present but is constantly flowing and ever-changing. The continuity of the flow makes it appear as though it is ever-present. Even our bodies are constantly changing but appear ever-present. All manifestations are ever-changing, ever-present eternal.

*Samsara* is eternal too, without a beginning and an end. The world that came into being a long time ago changes and exists for a long time. Even when all the manifestations are destroyed, there will be a new creation, and the cycle will continue. *Samsara* is the constantly changing permanence.

When *samsara* is compared to the peepal tree, the leaves that protect and beautify the tree are compared to the *Karma kanda* section of the Vedas.

#### ***Karma kanda* of the Vedas**

The Vedas are divided into two sections:

1. The *Karma kanda*
2. The *Jnana kanda*

*Karma kanda* is the section of the Vedas that lists rituals and ceremonies, which, when performed, helps one attain his desires. It recommends fruitive actions and sacrifices for attaining pleasure in this world and elevation to heavenly planets after death.

*Karma kanda* builds desire in one and shows the means to attain it. It prescribes different actions to attain different desires and/or remove obstacles on the path to attaining them. Basically, they prescribe different sacrifices to attain different desires like wealth, health, children etc.

To experience pleasure, we need the object of our desire, a relationship with that object and the power in our body to experience the object. Only when all three come together will we be able to experience joy (or sorrow). To get them all in line, we need merits. So *Karma kanda* recommends action that generates merits, and as a result, one attains the object of his desires and circumstance to enjoy it. Through *Karma kanda*, one

will always be in action and, as a result of his action, will experience the consequences (or indulgences).

When one performs actions to attain merit for indulgence, he will also commit sins while indulging in them, even without his knowledge. Through these sins, he will accumulate demerits. Therefore as long as one is in *Karma kanda*, he accumulates both merits and demerits. And to experience the merits and the demerits, he will need a body, relationships, circumstances and a world. Therefore, the *Karma kanda* of the Vedas keeps one in *samsara*. It protects one from coming out of the delusion, keeping him tied to the world.

Many people, however, think that performing sacrifices is spirituality. *Karma kanda* are not spiritual practices. What they actually are, are just righteous practices. Only when one leaves *Karma kanda* to enter *Jnana kanda* (the knowledge/ philosophy section) does he enter spirituality. Until then, whether one is religious or not, his destiny is *samsara*, therefore:

1. *Karma kanda* keeps one in *samsara*
2. *Karma kanda* beautifies *samsara* which is fundamentally flawed. *Karma kanda*, which shows one how to attain his desires, does not show the sorrow they will eventually bring. It only shows the beautiful side of things and hides everything else.
3. *Karma kanda* hides the true nature of *samsara*: It hides the flaws of living from desires to desires. It does not show the transience of all desires. Nothing in the manifested world can satiate one forever, but *Karma kanda* deludes the mind by showing ways to attain temporary pleasure, which is followed by sorrow.

When one realises nothing in this world will satiate him, he then yearns for liberation. And only *Jnana kanda* reveals the hidden truth, unveiling the flaws of *samsara*, birth and desires.

#### **What is the need for *Karma kanda*?**

The Vedas are said to have come from *Ishvara*, and *Karma kanda* is a part of the Vedas. When one has too many desires, even knowing that attaining all the desires will not satiate him forever will not remove his desires. And in general, a mind that is too occupied with desires is not ready to listen to the scriptures (*jnana yoga*). When someone is not qualified to listen to the truth, they cannot grasp it even when it is disclosed. Therefore, they must be allowed to experience and fulfil their desires righteously.

The right way for anybody with too much desire is to experience them righteously. *Karma kanda* is required because it helps fulfil the desires righteously. One will not slip from the path to the truth by following *Karma kanda*. By progressing this way, one will soon realise that his desires will not satiate him and getting tired of *samsara*, he will search for knowledge. By being in righteous actions, one also attains purity of mind. But *Karma kanda* binds one. Like the leaves protecting the trees, *Karma kanda* protects *samsara*.

Lord Krishna says who knows the tree, and its roots know it all. We must understand that the real nature of the world is a delusion, and its base is *Brahman*. To consolidate, one must understand that:

1. The world is a zone of *samsara*
2. The world is comparable to a peepal tree.
3. The roots of the tree are comparable to the *Brahman*, which is the base of *samsara*.
4. That which is manifested and therefore experiential is lower and eternal.



5. *Karma kanda* of the Vedas is compared to the leaves of this *samsara* tree, and they bind us.

Lord Krishna further compares the components of the tree to *samsara*. He compares the small branches to our physical bodies. He compares the buds that grow into smaller branches to the objects of the world and the smaller secondary roots to attraction and aversion.

**The small branches:** The smaller branches which grow on the top and bottom of the bigger branches are compared to lower and higher physical bodies. The bodies of animals are referred to as lower bodies, and the bodies of humans and demigods are referred to as higher bodies. The human body is considered higher only because with each human birth, liberation is a possibility. Even though the demigods are considered higher births and can experience more pleasure, one cannot attain liberation through such bodies. Even demigods are born within the realm of *samsara*. The animals cannot experience *samsara* and do not have the capabilities to understand the Self.

**Buds:** Buds are the reason for the small branches to arise from the big branch. The bud is compared to the objects of the world. One gets lower and higher birth because of the objects of the world. We desire the objects we see, and the desires lead us to actions. The actions accumulate merits and demerits. Merits and demerits inevitably result in circumstances of joy and sorrow.

The reason for desire is because the objects are available in this world. One cannot desire objects he does not know about. Like the small buds that lead to lower and higher branches, the objects of desire lead one to lower and higher bodies.

Knowledge of objects leads to desires. Desires lead to actions, and actions have consequences (both visible and invisible). The invisible consequences manifest as joy and sorrow in one's experience. One can experience joy and sorrow only with a body, so the invisible consequences of an action are the reason for birth. The body that is born because of the objects experiences the objects again. This is a vicious cycle.

When we come into the body, we get attached to the body and the objects. The *gunas* the body is made of get involved in their respective actions. The *sattva guna* gets involved in *sattvic* actions, the *rajas* in *rajasic* and *tamas* in *tamasic*. The body is nourished by the *gunas*. And whatever objects we meditate on while dying, we are born again to experience them. We have earned all the circumstances and people we meet in our lives through our nature and desire.

**The secondary roots:** The secondary roots are compared to our attachment and aversion, most of which come out of our mental imprints. Our mental imprints and tendencies have been formed as a result of our past deeds, and they drive us into action. Our likes and dislikes bind us in action. The righteous and unrighteous mental imprints (*samskaras*) and tendencies (*vasanas*) get one involved in actions causing births and deaths. Though the body is obtained because of the objects, one's life is shaped based on one's attachments and aversions.

Not only the Gita but many Upanishads also compare *samsara* with a tree. The tree is compared to the world, and the birds are compared to the individual soul, which perches on the trees and enjoys the fruits. The fruits here metaphorically mean the fruits of the deed — some fruits are enjoyable, and some are not. By eating the fruits, the birds become responsible for making more trees and, thereby, more fruits. Similarly, *samsara* goes on without an end.

### The Samsara Tree

Roots	—————	Brahman
Branches	—————	Body
Leaves	—————	Karma kanda
The small branches	—————	The lower and higher bodies
Buds	—————	The objects of the world
These secondary roots	———	To attachments and aversions

## Verses 1 – 2

Lord Krishna said,

*The scriptures speak of the imperishable peepal tree with its roots above and branches below, whose leaves are the Vedic hymns, and the one who knows this is the knower of the Vedas. 15.1*

*Its branches extend downwards and upwards, nourished by the **gunas**, with the buds being the sense objects. Its roots spreading downwards gives rise to actions and reactions. 15.2*



## Part II

### *Mithya*

*Pramana* means instrument to knowledge. There are several instruments that help us attain knowledge. Some types of *pramanas* are:

***Pratyaksa pramana:*** *Pratyaksa* means perception. The five sense organs serve as instruments to attain knowledge of the world. We directly get information through our sense organs. The sense organs are called *Pratyaksa Pramana*.

***Anumana pramana:*** *Anumana* means inference. When we see smoke in a faraway mountain, we can say there is fire even though we do not see the fire directly. We come to a conclusion through our reasoning ability by seeing the sign of its existence — in this case, the smoke. This is *anumana pramana*.

***Anupalabdhi pramana:*** We can use any instrument of knowledge and declare an object exists. The '*sat*' or the existence of an object can be proven through the instrument that provides knowledge about that object. Similarly, to say an object does not exist, we must use the same instrument of knowledge (through which we can prove its existence) and prove the object does not exist. For instance, if we see a pot and declare there is a pot when the pot is removed, we can declare that the pot is not there by seeing the absence of the pot. However, one cannot declare there is no pot even without seeing its absence; then that will not be valid information. We need an instrument (*pramana*) to say an object exists, and only through the same instrument can we declare the object does not exist.

#### **Can an object exist and not exist at the same time?**

No object can exist and not exist in the same place at the same time. For instance, light and its absence (darkness) cannot exist in the same place at the same time. There is, however, a peculiar object which we cannot say exists and also cannot say does not exist. The object is the *samsara* tree. The world is delusional. One cannot say it does not exist and also cannot say it exists. In the snake and the rope example, when we see the snake, we can say the snake is real. It exists. But once we realise it is a rope, the snake disappears. However, while seeing the snake in the rope, even though it is a delusion, we experience fear and other emotions. It is some kind of existence because of which the viewer had an experience. This kind of existence is *mithya*.

#### **How did delusion (*mithya*) come into being?**

There should be a reason for the snake to appear on the rope. The scriptures say the reason for the snake to appear is because of delusion. Delusion comes into being because of using the wrong instrument, like ignorance and superimposition. *Pramana* (instruments for knowledge) leads us to prove that something exists. *Anupalabdhi pramana* leads to the proof that something does not exist. The wrong instruments lead to delusion. It is not possible to explain or analyse what causes delusion. One may be deluded at the time he sees the snake, and the other may not be. And once the deluded attains the knowledge of the rope, the snake disappears, and only the rope exists. Similarly, the world is real only until one attains the knowledge of *Brahman*. However, unlike the snake, the world does

not disappear for the *yogi*. But like the water mirage, it will still exist, and the Self-realised will not be affected by it. When one knows that what appears like water is just a mirage and not water, he will not go there to quench his thirst. Similarly, when one understands the world is a delusion, he will not indulge in it to derive pleasure. The world did not come into being from the right instruments, nor can it be negated that it does not exist. It is a delusion. The body, the world, the experiences, and *samsara* are just forms due to the wrong perception because of using the wrong instruments. When the perception gets corrected, the reality goes to *Brahman*, and the world becomes a delusion.

**When did delusion appear, and when will it go away?**

We cannot say the delusion appeared at any particular time because it does not have a real existence. Another characteristic of delusion is that even though it does not exist, it keeps appearing. But if we inquire into it, it becomes non-existent. Therefore, delusion, without an existence, does not have a beginning, middle or end. Delusion comes out of our ignorance.

**How can one come out of *samsara*?**

To cut down the *samsara* tree fully, one must first weaken it by removing its leaves and branches, and then the weakened tree must be uprooted. These two steps are:

1. Attaining dispassion
2. Attaining the knowledge of the Self

When we attain dispassion towards the world, from all its pleasures, we reduce the impact the world has on us. Dispassion is the instrument to cut the *samsara* tree off its branches and leaves. One must sharpen the instrument through constant practice of discrimination. We will acquire wisdom about the world — its true nature only by practising discrimination again and again. We can only sacrifice pleasure from sense objects when we see a superior joy. When the mind moves towards attaining a higher goal, it will remove its attachment to trivial sense pleasures, and the dispassion gets stronger. We will then leave the lower joy to experience the higher.

The scriptures divide our attachment into three categories, and one must remove attachments from all of them to attain dispassion:

1. We are attached to our relationships with other people.
2. We are attached to objects, and we accumulate objects assuming they protect us.
3. We are attached to land, power, position and titles.

Dispassion is the attitude of non-indulgence in this world and not desiring a better world after death. It is not hatred of objects or pleasure. Knowledge helps one attain dispassion, but knowledge alone will not lead to dispassion. Before learning the scriptures, one will have neither knowledge nor dispassion. After learning, one will have knowledge but may not have dispassion. Even after learning, there is no certainty that one will attain dispassion.

**Overcome Samsara by**

Attaining dispassion

Attaining the knowledge of the Self

**Why do we desire so much?**

The root of desire is *sankalpa*. No object will directly enter our minds and become our deep desires. When we meditate on an object, we think of all the pleasure that object will give us. This is *sankalpa*. Desires are built by meditating on the objects. They must also be removed the same way, by meditation, but on the flaws of the objects.

The reason for *sankalpa* is lack of knowledge, the lack of understanding of the nature of the objects. Lack of knowledge leads to *sankalpa*, and *sankalpa* leads to desires and desires to lack of dispassion.

When one is able to see both the flaws and the virtues of an object, he will not brood on it. If one broods on an object, it means he only sees the good side. When we see the flaws of an object, we remove the *sankalpa* and, therefore, the desire and attain dispassion towards the object.

### **Discrimination**

To attain dispassion, we must attain the power to discriminate. One way to see objects is to see them as they are without our attachment and aversion to them. Another way is to see the flaws of the objects. One who has indulgence must see the flaws in the objects to remove the indulgences. By seeing the flaws again and again and practising discrimination, we will be able to renounce them. When dispassion gets strong enough, one must move to *jnana yoga* (the *yoga* of knowledge). On renouncing, a person neither gets petty joy from indulgence nor experiences the bliss of the Soul. Therefore, on attaining dispassion, one must protect it and move quickly to knowledge. *Jnana yoga* is the direct means to understand *Brahman* (Absolute Consciousness).

The reason for *samsara* is *Brahman* and the lack of knowledge about *Brahman*. The rope and the lack of knowledge about the rope is the reason for the snake.

Lord Krishna says the fruit of completing *jnana yoga* is that one will not fall back into *samsara*. The sorrow and ignorance the knowledge removes will not come back. He also emphasises devotion to attain the state of bliss. Unlike many other spiritual practices, which can be left after one attains their results, devotion must be practised from the start to the end. Even during *nididhyasana*, one must have faith and surrender to God. The path to liberation is full of failures, only devotion will keep one going, and by surrendering the ego, one gets the strength to continue on this path. Lord Krishna says that we must surrender our ego to the One who is the source of the world.

## **Verses 3 – 4**

Lord Krishna said,

*The real form of this tree is inconceivable in this world, neither its end nor its origin nor its continued existence. This firmly rooted peepal tree must be cut with the strong axe of non-attachment. Then one must seek to go there from where there is no return to this world again by taking refuge in Him — the Primeval *Purusha* from whose *maya* this perpetual tree of the material world has appeared* 15.3- 15.4

Lord Krishna details the characteristics of the wise, having perfected which they have attained the place of no return. These characteristic traits must be the goal of a spiritual aspirant.



### Part III

## The Wise

### The characteristics of the wise

1. **Free from vanity and delusion:** The wise are free from pride and vanity that arise out of "I-ness", which comes from identifying oneself with the body. They have removed the delusion and, with it, their ego.
2. **Conquered attachments:** As long as we associate ourselves with objects or people, we will have attachment or aversion towards them. Attachment or aversion disrupts our mental calmness; therefore, they are considered flaws. They increase the "I-ness" and other attributes of *samsara* like anger, jealousy, greed etc. To remove the association with an object, one can physically disassociate from them and see how one's mind and body function without them. Another way to remove the attachment is to practice seeing the flaws in the objects.
3. **Always dwelling in the Self:** The wise with the knowledge of the Self and establishing in that knowledge dwell in the Self without digressing. The three-step exercise to dwell in the Self are:
  - Discrimination: One must first know what is permanent and what is not.
  - Dispassion: By knowing what is transient, one must remove them from their goal and seek to know the permanent.
  - Knowledge: One must attain knowledge and standstill in it. This step is called *jnana yoga*.
4. **Removed desires from objects one does not possess:** We develop attachment and aversion for objects we already have and build desires for those which we do not. The wise do not desire or have tendencies for the desire because of the knowledge that there is nothing apart from him. Knowledge removes all desires from one.
5. **Free from dualities:** The wise are free from the dualities of the world, like pain, pleasure, honour, and dishonour. The wise experience the dualities outwardly. The body and the mind will experience the dualities, but they will not be affected by them. They accept the dualities as they come. They do not resist the undesirable. Many do not even understand that the experience is different from being afflicted by them. The wise take both good and bad as God's grace. They are neither attached to pleasure nor do they have an aversion toward pain.

## Verses 5

Lord Krishna said,

*Devoid of vanity and illusion, detached from degraded associations, perspective of the permanent and the transient, free from desires and dualities of pleasure*



*and pain, the undeluded attain My Supreme abode. 15.5*

Lord Krishna details his Supreme abode.

### **The nature of the Supreme abode**

**Self-illuminant:** That which is not illuminated by other objects but illuminates everything else is defined as Self-illuminant. There is no other example for this term other than *Brahman*. The sun may seem to illuminate everything, but it is our eyes that perceive its illumination. The eyes are perceived by the mind, and the mind is perceived by *Brahman*. *Brahman* is not perceived by any other object. It illuminates all objects. The sun cannot illuminate the *Brahman* nor the moon or fire. Lord Krishna says by attaining such (*Brahman*), there is no fallback. In this world, we can lose anything we have attained, but once a person attains liberation, there is no falling back into *samsara*, and there is no return to this material world. There are no more deaths for this *yogi*.

## **Verses 6**

Lord Krishna said,

*Neither the sun nor the moon nor the fire can illuminate the Supreme Abode of Mine. Having gone there, there is no return. 15.6*



## Part IV

# ***Brahman and Jiva***

Lord Krishna says an individual soul, on attaining *Brahman*, does not come back. If that's the case, **what is the relationship between *Brahman* and the individual soul (*jiva*)?**

*Jiva* means an individual soul, a living entity. *Brahman* is inexplicable. There are no words to describe *Brahman* accurately. Those who try to describe *Brahman* will fall short of words and will not be able to communicate fully. The relationship between *Brahman* and the individual soul is, therefore, hard to explain. To talk about a relationship, there must be at least two objects. According to Advaita, there is no second object.

Lord Krishna uses the term *amsa* to define the individual soul. *Amsa* means a part. He says the individual soul is my *amsa*. However, many misunderstand that an individual soul is a fragment of the whole. The individual must not be seen as a fragment of *Brahman* but more like Its own reflection. Let us try to understand it with an analogy. The sun's reflection inside a water pot can be referred to as its *amsa*. There cannot be a relationship between the sun and its reflection, as one is real and the other is not. The reflection is essentially the sun (though not the literal sun) but is not a fragment of the sun. It is not something apart or different from the sun. No matter how many such reflections are there of the sun, they will not deplete or increment the sun in any way. The sun remains unaffected by the reflection, regardless of what happens to the reflection.

Waves on an ocean are another example, and so is the shadow of a person. There cannot be a relationship between the real and the unreal.

The subtle body stays subjugated in the causal body, and during creation, it comes out. At the beginning of a new creation cycle, when everything comes into manifestation from *maya*, the mind (made of the five subtle elements) gets the ability to reflect *Brahman's* consciousness. The '*cit*' (consciousness) attribute of *Brahman* is reflected in the subtle body making the otherwise lifeless (*jada*) subtle body conscious. This reflection of *Brahman's* consciousness in the subtle body is called *chidabhasa*. There is the *cit*, and there is the *chidabhasa*. The '*cit*' (consciousness) is the true nature of the individual. The *chidabhasa* becomes the ego of the individual. *Chidabhasa* is the false individual, while the *cit* is the truth.

### **Birth and death**

To understand the relationship between the individual soul and *Brahman* better, let's compare the sun to *Brahman*, the pot to the gross body of the individual, the water to the subtle body and the reflection of the sun to the *chidabhasa*.

The reflection in the water suggests there is a sun. The existence is *Brahman*. The form is a delusion. *Brahman* is the real, and the individual soul is the reflection. The *jiva* is the unreal delusion which is the *samsari*. Like the reflection inside the pots that moves according to the water, even if the sun does not, the *jiva* behaves according to one's mental imprints and tendencies even though the Soul does not act. The reflection may look different, as though different from the source, but it is essentially

*Brahman* acting out based on the likes and dislikes of the subtle body it is reflected on.

*Brahman* is the "*Sat*" — the existence aspect of all objects. The *chidabhasa jiva* is attached to the gross body and thinks it is the body and believes it perishes during death.

Death is, however, only changing the pot. It is like moving the water (with the reflection) into a new pot. Death is only the destruction of the gross body. During death, our mind with consciousness (*chidabhasa*) moves away from the gross body. In the state of death, our minds and consciousness do not die. Similarly, birth is taking up a new gross body. There is no birth even for the mind.

*Jiva* is a subtle body, and *chidabhasa* is the reflection of consciousness. Death is *jiva* leaving the gross body. Birth is *jiva* taking up a gross body.

When the *chidabhasa* leaves the body, the '*cit*' does not leave anything. It is ever-present. The *chidabhasa* leaves with the subtle body which carries our imprints, tendencies, our accumulated merits, demerits and our senses. It packs up everything and leaves during death. A corpse is a body without a mind. It is a gross body without a subtle body.

*Jiva* = Soul + *chidabhasa* + subtle body

There is nothing other than the *Brahman*, but because of *maya*, there seem to be different objects. Lord Krishna says during death, the lord (here, meaning the *jiva*) takes away the subtle body with the five sense organs. The five senses organs are sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing. Though the organs are there in the physical body, untouched even after death, the power behind them is lost during death. The gross body, without the subtle body, will not be able to perceive with the senses. The subtle body, which leaves the gross body, then takes up another gross body.

After leaving the gross body, the individual soul (*jiva*) goes to different abodes based on its *karma* and, when the *karma* finishes, takes up a different body.

The subtle body has 19 elements to it: 5 sense organs, 5 action organs, 5 pranas, the mind, intellect, ego, and memory.

Lord Krishna says like the wind blowing away the fragrance from the flowers. The *jiva* takes away the subtle body from the gross body.

**Why does the *jiva* leaving a body, take another?**

When the *jiva* (individual soul) has experienced all it had to experience from that body, it leaves that body. When the *karma phala* (fruits of the action) of the body is over, one changes the body to experience new *karma phala* (fruits) with a new body. With a body, a *jiva* does the following:

1. It finishes the old merits and demerits
2. It accumulates new merits and demerits through its deeds.

One becomes a *samsari* with a body. The gross body (physical body) is a place. The *jiva* goes from one place to another to experience all the *karmas* and, in the process, creates new *karmas*.

Having talked about the *jiva*, birth, and death, Lord Krishna tells us the reason behind a such elaborate discussion. He says *chidabhasa* indicates the existence of '*cit*' — The Absolute Consciousness. With the help of *chidabhasa*, we must attain Absolute Consciousness. Fire is the reason for smoke, and smoke indicates there is fire. If we understand *chidabhasa*, we will be able to understand the concept of *cit*. Lord Krishna says the existence of *chidabhasa* becomes a symbol of *Brahman* — a reason-cause relationship, from which one can infer the Supreme. From the visible, we must understand the invisible principle.

**The four characteristics of *jiva*:**

With these four characteristics of the individual soul, the wise inquire into the principles of the invisible and attain the Supreme knowledge.

1. Death
2. Existence
3. Experience
4. *Gunas*

**Death:** If there are two bodies in front of us, one alive and the other dead, one lifeless and rotting and the other conscious, the wise understand there is some element in the body that keeps it alive, a consciousness other than the body itself. Death shows us the consciousness principle in function. Death shows us the existence of external consciousness. Death shows us *chidabhasa*. And if there is a reflection, there must be a source. Lord Krishna says through death, the wise infers that there is an external consciousness; from it, they infer that there should be a source (Absolute) consciousness. The wise see the principle of deathlessness through death.

**Existence:** When alive, the body acts. The *jada* does not act. The body is also made of the five primordial elements like the rest of the manifestations. It is, therefore, something apart from it because of which the body acts.

**Experience:** The gross body is *jada* (lifeless). Without consciousness, it is the same as the world. We split the world into two: the experiencer and the experiences. The experience we go through shows there is an awareness beyond the gross manifestations.

**Gunas:** The *jiva* experiences different *gunas*. It is something with *gunas*. When something is said to be with something, it means there are two different objects there. The *jiva* is different from the *gunas*, which come and go in one.

#### The wise inquire into the principles of the invisible through

Death	Existence	Experience	Gunas
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Some inquire about the Self and attain its result, while others do not attain any result from it. Lord Krishna explains why some, even though they go through the process of *jnana yoga*, do not attain the desired results. He says without a pure mind (*chitta shuddhi*), one will not attain the result of *jnana yoga* even when done for several years. Knowledge becomes wisdom only in a pure mind.

Just like the gross body gets dirty and succumbs to diseases, the subtle body, which is also a body, gets dirty and succumbs to its diseases. By nature, even without building them, everybody has impurities like anger, greed, and comparison in their subtle bodies. One attains a pure mind by removing these impurities and acquiring good qualities. With impurities in mind, the inquiry about the Self will not produce any result because it is the subtle body that acts as an instrument for acquiring knowledge.

If we listen to the scriptures without having attained the purity of mind, it may lead to different benefits, like purifying the mind or developing faith in the subject. If one does live righteously, irrespective of any efforts he makes towards Self-realisation, the efforts will not yield the desired results. *Karma yoga* (righteous living) will eventually result in the purity of the mind. All our actions purify us if done correctly.

## Verses 7 – 11

Lord Krishna said,

*Verily, the individual souls are my infinitesimal fragments and are eternal.*

*They draw to themselves the five senses and the mind, which is the sixth abiding by nature. 15.7*

*When The Lord acquires a body and leaves it, He takes the senses and mind and goes with them as the wind takes the fragrance from the flowers. 15.8*

*Presiding over the ear, eyes, touch, smell, taste and mind, He (the **jiva** — the infinitesimal fragment) enjoys the objects of the senses. 15.9*

*The deluded do not see Him who departs the body, resides in the body and enjoys from the body with the **gunas**. But those who possess the eye of wisdom can see Him. 15.10*

*The striving **yogis** behold Him dwelling in the self. But those whose minds are not pure do not find Him even though they strive to do so. 15.11*



## Part V

# The Eternal

Lord Krishna says He is both the experiencer and the experiential, both the *jiva* and the *jagat* (world) — the substratum of everything. He takes three examples to elucidate this point. He says He is the sun because of which the world is nurtured and is the moon which nourishes the plants and the fire that illuminates and digests the four types of food — the food that is chewed, swallowed or drunk, those that are sucked like mangoes and sugarcane, and that are licked like honey.

Lord Krishna concludes this chapter by saying that only He is worthy to be known and that all the Vedas from Him lead to Him.

## Verses 12 – 15

Lord Krishna said,

*Know that the effulgence which emanates from the sun illuminating the whole world and that which is in the moon and in the fire is Mine. 15.12*

*Permeating the earth, I nurture all beings with My energy. And becoming the essence of the moon, I nourish all plants. 15.13*

*As the fire of digestion, I abide in the body of living beings and digest the four kinds of food with the association of incoming and outgoing breath. 15.14*

*And I am seated in the hearts of all. From Me arises memory, knowledge, as well as forgetfulness. Verily, I am to be known by the Vedas. I am the author of the Vedanta and the knower of the meaning of the Vedas. 15.15*

### The Three Purushas

Having declared He is the substratum of everything, Lord Krishna divides everything into three principles — the three Purushas.

1. *Kshara Purusha*
2. *Akshara Purusha*
3. *Uttama Purusha*

***Kshara Purusha:*** *Kshara* means anything that can be destroyed or susceptible to change. Anything that is manifested undergoes change and eventually destruction. Therefore, everything that is manifested is *Kshara Purusha*. This includes the five primordial elements (gross and subtle), bodies, *jiva*, the world etc.

**Characteristics of *Kshara Purusha*:**

1. *Kshara Purusha* is the cause (*kariya*).
2. Because it is a product, it is available for transactions.

***Akshara Purusha:*** *Akshara* means indestructible and non-changeable. Generally, this term is used to refer to *Nirguna Brahman*. However, in this context, it refers to *maya*. The *maya* in its unmanifest state is *akshara*. *Maya* is eternal, which undergoes cycles of creation and destruction and yet has always existed and will always exist. *Maya*, in



its original state, is unmanifest. *Maya* undergoes change and manifests.

#### Characteristics of *Akshara Purusha*:

1. *Akshara Purusha* is the reason for the cause: The reason for the creation of the universe, the body and the mind. *Maya* is responsible for the creation of the lifeless and the conscious elements. Though consciousness is not an attribute of anything that is manifested, some manifestations can receive/ reflect the consciousness of *Brahman*, which leads to two types of manifestations:
  - *Bhoktha* — the enjoyer, the conscious manifestation
  - *Bhogyā* — the enjoyed, the non-conscious manifestations.
2. *Maya* is the material cause of all the manifestations (*upadana karana*): The material manifestation is also called the *parinami karana*. *Parinami* means ever transforming. It is something that changes to become the material cause. An example would be milk changing itself to become curd. An infinitesimal fragment of *maya* attains change, and the universe is created.

#### The intellectual cause of the universe

The intellectual cause cannot be a non-conscious object. The intellectual cause has to be the one with awareness. For example, clay cannot make itself into a pot. *Maya* is the mind of *Brahman*. When *Brahman* expresses itself within *maya* as consciousness, *Brahman* becomes the intellectual cause of all manifestations. The same *maya* that has *Brahman's* consciousness within becomes the intellectual cause of all manifestations. For *Kshara Purusha* (cause), the *Akshara Purusha* becomes the reason (*karana*).

3. ***Maya* is unmanifest:** During creation, a fragment of *maya* attains change and causes the manifestation, and during dissolution, it goes back to the state of unmanifest. When it becomes the cause, it is in the state manifest, and when it is the reason, it is unmanifest. *Maya* is eternal without a beginning, middle and end because it is a delusion. And that which does not have an existence does not have a beginning or end. *Maya* is made of the three *gunas*, the *guna* of awareness, action and inaction. The three *gunas* are in equilibrium in the unmanifest *maya*, and they come out during manifestation. In the result (cause), we can see the *gunas*, but they are not seen in the unmanifest *maya*, which is the reason for the creation. *Maya* is *nistattva*. *Nistattva* is that which is immaterial or has no content. *Maya*, which does not have an existence of its own, is dependent on *Brahman*. The *maya* is eternal and without destruction. Removing ignorance removes *maya*.

***Uttama Purusha:*** *Uttama Purusha* means the Supreme Person — referred to as *Brahman*. It is the *Paramatma*.

#### Characteristics of *Uttama Purusha*:

1. ***Vivarta Karana:*** In *Advaita*, *vivarta* means the modification of the external without any real change. It is a projection without a change in the underlying reality. A rope is the *vivarta karana* for the snake. The rope does not undergo any change, yet it projects the snake on it. Similarly, *Brahman* — the sole reality is the *vivarta karana* for the world, which is an illusion. *Brahman* being the reason (*vivarta karana*) gives existence to all the manifestations — for all *maya's* projection. *Brahman* gives the 'sat' — existence quality for all there is. When one acquires knowledge about *Brahman*, the 'sat' is not removed from the world or all manifestations. Bringing something into existence is *vivarta karana*. *Brahman* gives the status of existence for the *maya* principle. With that, *maya* becomes the *Kshara Purusha* and *Akshara Purusha*. Like the rope being the substratum for the illusory snake, *Brahman* is the substratum for the illusory universe. But unlike the snake, which is entirely illusionary (*pratibhasika*) the universe is not entirely illusionary. The universe is empirical. It is a

transactional reality (*vyavaharika*). The universe is real for all those who are ignorant of *Brahman*.

2. **Unmanifest:** *Brahman* is non-depleting and non-changing. The *Kshara Purusha* constantly changes, and the *Akshara Purusha* has the seed for change.
3. *Brahman* is the consciousness and witness in all beings. Lord Krishna says *Brahman* is the bearer of all creations of all three worlds. Here the three worlds could refer to *Bhur*, *Bhuva* and *Suvar* or the three states of consciousness — sleep, dream and deep sleep or the three bodies — the gross, subtle and causal body.
4. *Brahman* is transcendental to both *Kshara* and *Akshara Purusha*. *Brahman* is beyond both reason and the cause, the *karanam* and *kariya*, because of which *Brahman* is also called *Purushothama* — Supreme *Purusha* or Supreme Being. *Brahman* is transcendental because even though *Brahman* is the foundation of everything, *Brahman* is unassociated with them all. Such a relationship is possible only when one has a higher order of reality than the other. Having higher order of reality in comparison with both *Maya* and its manifestations, *Brahman* is unassociated with them. The manifested, being a transactional reality, is lower than the Absolute reality.

Kshara Purusha	Akshara Purusha	Uttama Purusha
All manifestations	Maya in its unmanifest state	Projects without any change to the underlying reality
The cause	The reason for the cause	Unmanifest
Available for transactions	Eternal by changing.	Consciousness and witness in all beings
		Transcendental to both Kshara and Akshara Purusha

## Verse 16 – 20

Lord Krishna said,

*There are two **Purushas** in this world, the Perishable and the Imperishable. All the existences in the material realm are the Perishable, and the unchanging is the Imperishable. 15.16*

*But besides these two, there is yet another **Purusha** — the Supreme **Purusha**, the indestructible controller of the three worlds who pervades and sustains them. 15.17*

*As I am beyond the perishable and transcendental to the Imperishable also, I am celebrated as the Supreme Person — **Purushottama**, in the world and in the Vedas. 15.18*

Lord Krishna concludes the chapter by speaking about the glory and the fruits of knowledge.

*He who knows Me as the **Purushottama** without delusion, thereby knowing everything, worships Me with his whole being (heart). 15.19*

*Thus, this most secret principle of the Vedic scriptures has been taught by Me to you. By knowing this, one becomes wise and fulfils all that is to be accomplished. 15.20*



**Aum Tat Sat**

# Summary

## Part I – Introduction

- The chapter discusses one of the most fundamental and perhaps the most important concepts of the Vedas — "*Brahman Satyam Jagat Mithya*."
- Some scriptures, including Gita, expound on *samsara* in detail for the following reasons: to understand *samsara*, to attain dispassion, to understand that *Brahman* is the substratum for *samsara*
- Lord Krishna compares the world and all manifestations to a peepal tree in this chapter.
- Lord Krishna compares the tree's roots to *Brahman*, the branches to the body (the five primordial elements) and the leaves to the *Karma kanda* of the Vedas.
- Lord Krishna refers to *Brahman* as the superior most of them all because: *Brahman* is subtle, is the reason, is always existent and is the Ultimate Truth.
- Lord Krishna calls the branches (which are compared to the body) inferior because they are gross, are the cause, transient, are a delusion, and eternal that which keeps changing.
- The leaves that protect and beautify the tree are compared to the *Karma kanda* section of the Vedas as *Karma kanda* beautifies *samsara* and keeps one in *samsara*. It hides the true nature of *samsara*. They bind one.
- *Karma kanda* is required because it helps fulfil the desires righteously. The right way for anybody with too much desire is to experience them righteously. One will not slip from the path to the truth by following *Karma kanda*.
- Lord Krishna compares the smaller branches which grow on the top and bottom of the bigger branches to lower and higher physical bodies.
- Buds are the reason for the small branches to arise from the big branch. The bud is compared to the objects of the world. One gets lower and higher birth because of the objects of the world.
- These secondary roots are compared to our attachment and aversion, most of which come out of our mental imprints. Our mental imprints and tendencies have been formed as a result of our past deeds, and they drive us into action.

## Part II – *Mithya*

- The world is delusional. One cannot say it does not exist and also cannot say it does.
- Delusion comes into being because of using the wrong instrument, like ignorance and superimposition. *Pramana* (instruments for knowledge) leads us to prove that something exists. *Anupalabdhi pramana* leads to the proof that something does not exist. The wrong instruments lead to delusion.
- When the perception gets corrected, the reality goes to *Brahman*, and the world becomes a delusion.
- We cannot say the delusion appeared at any particular time because it does not have a real existence. Another characteristic of delusion is that even though it does not exist, it keeps appearing. But if we inquire into it, it becomes non-existent. Therefore, delusion without an existence does not have a beginning, middle or end. Delusion comes out of our ignorance.
- To cut down the *samsara* tree fully, one must first weaken it by removing its leaves and branches first, and then the weakened tree must be uprooted. These two steps are: attaining dispassion, attaining the knowledge of the Self
- By seeing the flaws again and again and practising discrimination, we will be able to renounce.

- Lord Krishna says the fruit of completing *jnana yoga* is that one will not fall back into *samsara*.
- He also emphasises devotion. The path to liberation is full of failures, only devotion will keep one going, and by surrendering the ego, one gets the strength to continue on this path.

### Part III – The Wise

- The characteristics of the wise: free from vanity and delusion, has conquered attachments, always dwelling in the Self, removed desires from objects he does not possess, free from dualities.
- Lord Krishna says the wise reach His Supreme Abode, which is Self-illuminating.

### Part IV – *Brahman* and *jiva*

- Lord Krishna uses the term *amsa* to define the individual soul. *Amsa* means a part. He says the individual soul is my *amsa*. However, many misunderstand that an individual soul is a fragment of the whole. The individual must not be seen as a fragment of *Brahman* but more like Its own reflection.
- The '*cit*' (consciousness) attribute of *Brahman* is reflected in the subtle body making the otherwise lifeless (*jada*) subtle body conscious. The '*cit*' (consciousness) is the true nature of the individual. The *chidabhasa* becomes the ego of the individual. It is the false individual, while the *cit* is the truth.
- *Jiva* = Soul + *chidabhasa* + subtle body
- With a body, a *jiva* does the following: it finishes the old merits and demerits, it accumulates new merits and demerits through its deeds.
- One becomes a *samsari* with a body
- With these four characteristics of the individual soul, the wise inquire into the principles of the invisible and attain the Supreme knowledge: death, existence, experience, and *gunas*.

### Part V – The Eternal

- Lord Krishna says He is both the experiencer and the experiential, both *jiva* and the *jagat* (world) — the substratum of everything.
- The Three *Purushas*: *Kshara Purusha*: *Kshara* means anything that can be destroyed or susceptible to change. *Kshara Purusha* is the cause (*kariya*), and because it is a product, it is available for transactions.
- *Akshara Purusha*: *Akshara* means indestructible and non-changeable. Generally, this term is used to refer to *Nirguna Brahman*. However, in this context, it refers to *maya*. *Maya*, in its unmanifest state, is *akshara*. *Maya* is eternal, which undergoes change.
- *Akshara Purusha* is the reason for the cause. *Maya* is the material cause of all the manifestations. *Maya* is unmanifest
- *Uttama Purusha*: *Paramatma*: is the *vivarta karana*: In *Advaita*, *vivarta* means the modification of the external without any real change. It is a projection without a change in the underlying reality. *Brahman* is unmanifest. *Brahman* is the consciousness and witness in all beings. *Brahman* is transcendental to both *Kshara* and *Akshara Purusha*.

## Chapter 16

# Daivaasura-Sampad-Vibhaga Yoga



This chapter is called *Daivaasura-Sampad-Vibhaga Yoga*. *Daiva* means divine. *Asura* means demonic. *Sampad* is wealth, riches or possessions, something that has been acquired with effort. In this chapter, Lord Krishna discusses the divine and demonic nature we have acquired with effort over many lifetimes. He expounds extensively on the divine traits one must develop, and the demonic one must remove. These discussions are an extension of the values detailed in chapter thirteen.





## Part I

# Introduction

*Sattva* is the quality of awareness. *Rajas* is the quality of passion, and *tamas* is the quality of ignorance. All three qualities are present in all beings. However, their proportions vary largely in everyone. We can divide all humans based on their predominant *guna* — the quality they are in most of the time.

**Those with predominant *tamas guna*:** The scriptures say those with predominant *tamas guna* generally tend to have more demonic characteristics. They have more hatred in them. Their very nature is influenced by anger and hatred and, therefore, is generally violent. The anger and hatred in them manifest as harm to others. They have a sadistic approach to life, deriving pleasure from others' suffering. Revenge and violence become their attitude, having earned them over many lifetimes, and they develop it further without any self-control. They are referred to as *asuras* in the scriptures. *Asura* means demonic or evil.

**Those with predominant *rajas guna*:** For those with predominant *rajas guna*, hatred is not the dominant attribute, but desire is. Unlike those in *tamas*, these people do not derive joy from harming others. They derive pleasure from attaining objects they desire. But to attain their desired object, they will not mind harming others. Both with predominant *tamas* and *rajas guna* are called *asuras* and *rakshasa* in the scriptures. *Rakshasa* means cruel and wicked.

Lord Krishan refers to their attributes as *sampad* as *sampad* means wealth which is earned. He says they have earned their nature (mental imprints and tendencies) from many lifetimes.

**Those with predominant *sattva guna*:** Those with predominant *sattva guna* follow the path of non-violence (*ahimsa*). They do not harm others through actions, words, or thoughts.

When we hurt others for our satisfaction, even by words, we are momentarily in *tamas guna*. We become *asuras* at that time. When we hurt others for our selfish goals, we are in *rajas guna* at that moment. And when we are completely non-violent, we are in *sattva guna*.

Lord Krishna says that those with predominant *sattva guna* will follow the injunctions in the scriptures and will not perform actions forbidden in them. They will follow the path of righteousness and eventually take up the *yoga* of knowledge, leading themselves to liberation. And those with demonic characteristics are instigated into the path of unrighteousness.

Most people do not give enough attention to values because they do not understand their needs. We do not see the loss we encounter by not upholding our values. The highest and final goal of human life is to attain liberation. The direct effort to attain liberation is to perform *jnana yoga* through which we can remove ignorance. The scriptures say that we encounter three types of hindrances on this path. Three principles have to align to

attain any kind of knowledge, they are:

1. The instrument to knowledge
2. The object of knowledge.
3. The knower

**The instrument to knowledge:** With a flawed instrument, one will not get knowledge; even worse, we may get contrary knowledge. For example, with flawed eyes, we cannot get the correct visual knowledge of an object. The instruments for the knowledge of Self are the Upanishads and a *guru*.

**The object of knowledge:** Knowledge of an object cannot be attained if there are flaws in that which is to be known. For instance, if a cloth covers a book that is to be known, the book cannot be known. Similarly, when an object is too subtle, its subtlety becomes a hindrance to knowing it. Though *Brahman* is Self-illuminating, It is very subtle and difficult to attain knowledge about.

**The knower:** If the first two are not the reason for not having attained the knowledge, the flaw is in the knower. Only if there is a knower, the instrument to knowledge and the object of knowledge can be known. Knowledge cannot be attained even if the knower is present but is not qualified for it. And for the knowledge of Self, even if one is exceptionally intelligent, he may not qualify for it. The qualities required to attain knowledge are discrimination, dispassion, the six-fold path and a deep yearning for liberation.

The six-fold path is the *daivi-sampath* (divine characteristics) — the qualities one must not have. This chapter also discussed the demonic characteristics we must remove, essentially preparing us for the knowledge of Self.



## Part II

# The Divine Characteristics

Lord Krishna lists qualities we must possess and those we must remove. He discusses twenty-six divine qualities we must attain through our efforts, some of which were also discussed in chapter thirteen.

### 1. Fearlessness

To understand fearlessness, we must understand fear. All objects in this world are mixed up with fear. Some examples are:

- With indulging comes the fear of diseases. Any sense organ we use to indulge with will deplete sooner or later. Understanding this leads to fear.
- With pride in the community (or caste or race) comes the fear of its destruction.
- With money comes the fear of its loss. Adi Shankara once said that the one with money fears his own son.
- With honour comes the fear of infamy. Those who rejoice in their honour and fame fear that they may not be able to protect that forever. They fear losing their status, especially those who attain them without the right effort. The more one attains joy from their fame, the more they fear losing it.
- With strength comes the fear of the enemy. The strong are afraid of the stronger. A king with an army is afraid of another king's army.
- With beauty comes the fear of ageing. Those who take pride in their appearance are afraid of ageing.
- With scholarship comes the fear of other scholars.
- With good nature comes the fear of association. Those with good nature fear that other people may corrupt their good nature.
- With the body comes the fear of death.

Fear is mixed up with everything we experience, whether good or bad. Fear is another form of sorrow. One experiences fear in the present, but the object of that fear is always in the future. One does not experience fear from any of his experiences of the past. Thoughts about the future bring fear. Thoughts that we may experience sorrow in the future manifests as fear in the present. And when the object of fear manifests in the future, it will result in sorrow, not fear.

**What causes fear?** When we see a reason for sorrow in the future, we experience fear in the present. For example, when we see a reason (by correct or wrong judgement) for losing an object of our desire, we experience fear. Similarly, when we see a reason for experiencing something we do not want, we fear it might happen. Seeing a reason for sorrow brings fear. But when one experiences fear, it manifests as sorrow. Therefore, sorrow is experienced when we experience unfavourable circumstances, and also it is experienced as fear before experiencing the circumstances. Many *gurus* say this kind of

fear is useless. Most of the time, the fear is because of our imagination, and the circumstances feared may never come to manifestation. And a lot of times, even if the situation for sorrow occurs, it will not cause as much sorrow as the fear does. Experiencing sorrow is one thing, and experiencing fear because of our imagination is another, and this kind of fear is categorised as a demonic characteristic.

**Fear of scriptures:** Some fear the scriptures thinking that if they follow the scriptures and follow a righteous path, they may be left behind in life. Some people worry that they will fail if they follow the scriptures. The scriptures dictate renunciation as the path which contradicts one's experience.

**The nature of fear:** Fear can be divided into three categories,

1. Fear of death/ destruction
2. Fear of pain/ sorrow
3. Fear of ignorance

**Fear of death/destruction:** Everything in this world is perishable. The biggest of this fear is the fear of death. This, however, is not only the fear of death but the fear of destruction of possessions, fame etc. The more objects one has under 'mine-ness', the more will be his fear.

**Fear of pain/sorrow:** Anticipating a future possibility of sorrow leads to fear in the present. Resistance to sorrow manifests as fear. An example of this kind of fear is the fear of old age.

**Fear of ignorance:** Not knowing something becomes a reason for fear. Some examples are fear of darkness, strangers, and the future.

Fear, however, is also considered maturity and an attribute one must have.

**Why do we need fear?** Fear is necessary for protection. Without fear, we will not survive for such a long time. It is good to fear that which could destroy us when we do not have the strength to fight it. Many people are righteous only because of fear. Until we attain mental maturity, fear is necessary. But some fears are unnecessary and not good, and they must be removed.

**Means to become fearless:**

**Dispassion:** Dispassion removes fear. Desire is the cause of fear. Though many objects undergo destruction, they do not affect us. We feel sorrow only when the objects we are attached to undergo destruction. Anticipating their loss causes fear. The nature of death or destruction is not fear. It is the attachment that leads to fear. When we do not have any attachment to an object, we will not have fear about that object. When the attachment leaves, the fear leaves. Non-attachment leads to fearlessness. If one does not have dispassion, then the next step to achieving fearlessness is through discrimination.

**Discrimination:** Certain things are bound to happen regardless of our efforts in trying to prevent them. It could be the destruction of an object or people we are attached to, or it could be our own death, and nothing can stop such occurrences. With knowledge and contemplating intellectually, we can free ourselves from the fear of death and destruction. To remove the fear of suffering or sorrow, we must understand that our mind and body can take only so much pain that they can bear. More than that, even the body will not withstand physical pain, it will slip into a coma or death. Through understanding, we must remove the fear associated with pain or anticipated pain. We should know we have the power to face any sorrow. For those who cannot think through their fear intellectually, faith helps remove fear.

**Faith:** For those who are unable to attain dispassion and unable to remove fear through understanding intellectually, faith is the path. Even if others call it blind faith, it is better

to have blind faith and a fearless mind than to appear intelligent with a fearing mind. Having faith in God makes us fearless. In chapter nine, Lord Krishna declares He protests his devotees. He uses the term '*yogakshema*' to describe this. Apart from God, we must also have faith in the righteous path we take and know that it will protect us. Righteousness protects its protector. There is no failure for one on the path of righteousness. People on the righteous path get strength from following righteousness and hard work. We must have faith in ourselves, the values we follow, the righteousness we follow and in God that he will not abandon us. However, if one does not have faith, then fear can be removed by practice.

**Practice:** Those who do not have faith in the existence of God can remove fear with practice. We must make a list of all the fears we have and welcome them. We must experience them one by one, taking the least feared one first. It is not wrong to fear something, but we must not hold it inside. It is important to take courage and face it. The fear will weaken and eventually fade by facing and experiencing it (even if only in our imagination).

### The two ascetics

There were two ascetics in a village surrounded by a forest. After dark, one of them went inside his hut while the other went around the forest for a stroll. As he returned from the stroll, the other ascetic told him, *you are brave. You walk around in the dark. I fear the night in the forest.* The first ascetic replied, *I am going out only because of my fear. If I were brave, I would not have to go out. I fear the forest as much as you do, but I have the courage to face my fear.*

For a spiritual aspirant, fear is a hindrance. By removing fear, he will be able to progress on his goals with a peaceful mind. The second kind of fearlessness, the fearlessness of the wise, is called the goal in the scriptures. And that goal is attained through liberation. The *shastras* call liberation a fearless state. Through dispassion, one cannot attain the level of fearlessness one attains from liberation because the root cause of fear is duality. To remove the duality, one must attain knowledge which is non-dual in nature. Therefore, total fearlessness can be attained only from the knowledge of the Self.

The methods mentioned to remove fear are only for cleaning the mind and intellect. Only knowledge of the Self removes fear completely. Keeping the root cause of the fear and attaining fearlessness is superficial, and that is referred to as a divine characteristic. In this context, Lord Krishna is not referring to the fearlessness achieved through liberation but as a value that one must build to progress in the spiritual path.

## 2. Purity of mind

Purity of mind generally means keeping up all the good values and removing the bad ones. Characteristics like fearlessness, non-violence, humility, compassion and giving are good values. In the earlier chapter, we have seen various ways to build these values, one of them being building the opposite quality. For instance, to remove greed, we must practice giving. To remove anger, we must practice forgiveness and patience. Devotion is very important, especially when we do not have the power to change our nature. Devotion gives us the strength to pursue and the power to attain good qualities. Association with good-natured people and reading about those who led righteous life will also help us build good qualities. In this context, Lord Krishna talks about straightforwardness as the purity of the mind. This means our transactions must be pure, without ulterior motives or intentions to cheat or delude others.

### 3. Steadfastness in spiritual knowledge

Steadfastness in spiritual knowledge means attaining the knowledge of the Self through *sravana*, *manana* and *nididhyasana* and retaining it. If the mind is scattered, one cannot meditate on the attributeless (*Nirguna*) *Brahman*. To contemplate *Nirguna Brahman*, one must have control over the mind and senses along with other qualities like dispassion and faith. One must perform *nididhyasana* until one attains liberation. After liberation, *nididhyasana* will become one's nature, and one will not need the effort to perform it.

**How will one continue on this arduous path?** Only those with a deep yearning for liberation (*mumukshutva*) will choose this path and continue. There will be hindrances to anything one pursues. However, the intensity of the hindrance one feels depends on one's desire for the goal. The hindrances appear small if the desire for the goal is very strong. If not, they appear big, and one will not pursue them further. Instead of trying to remove the hindrance from the path, we must build an intense desire for liberation.

**How can we build desire?** *Sankalpa*: Desires are built by *sankalpa*. *Sankalpas* are repeated thinking of the same goal or the same object. It is a resolve to do something. If we keep thinking about the same thing again and again, we will build a desire for it. Desires arise from *sankalpa*. To build desire, we must build circumstances for *sankalpa*, which can be done with good associations by being in the company of other spiritual students, reading books on the subject, keeping the picture of the *guru* and reminding oneself of the practices to continue on the path.

#### Contemplating the glory of the result

We must see what we will achieve out of our spiritual practices — the end result of it. If a person contemplates the fruits of righteous living and spiritual practices, he will start desiring them more and more. By contemplating the glory of the result we will attain, we must build desire with awareness and discrimination (*viveka*). For this reason, the scriptures discuss the fruit of liberation very often. Through understanding and practice, we can build the desire further.

The content of the scriptures can be described in these three values — purity of mind, *jnana yoga* and fearlessness. With a pure mind, when one performs *jnana yoga*, it results in fearlessness.

### 4. Charity

Sharing valuables from one's possession with others wisely is charity. Only when a worthy object is given to others can it be called charity. Giving others what we do not want or disposing is not charity. And only that which is given to the needy is charity. Charity can be giving time, sharing knowledge, wealth, or valuables.

#### Attitude while performing charity

There may be several motives for one to give, but not all of them can be called charity. And the act of giving itself will not bring one merit. The attitude decides whether the action is a charity or not. The attitude behind giving brings one merit or demerit accordingly. In charity, the giver has more responsibility than those taking.

**How should we give?** Anything given as charity must be given with respect. The needy may be in fear, guilt, or a very low sense of self-worth because of their situation. So it is important to give in such a way that it mitigates all these emotions in the receiver. The best of charity is giving in such a way that the receiver does not feel he is receiving.

We must give when we know one is in need. It is insensitive to wait for them to ask. The giver must not hurt the receiver in any way while giving. We must not expect anything in return for that which is given as charity. It is not charity but a transaction if



we expect anything in return.

To be able to give and find the right person to give to is a great deal, and we must be happy if we are in such a position.

**How to begin giving?** To begin with, we must look to help the people around us — our family, people we are working with or those working for us, and then extend help to others.

### **The result of performing charity**

**Giving reduces greed:** Greed is the inherent nature and weakness of all human beings. To weaken greed, we must build the attitude of giving. When we use an object by ourselves, we will benefit from it, but when we share it with others, the benefits are much more, the greatest benefit being freeing ourselves from greed.

**Greed is bondage:** Greed is *samsara*. Regardless of how much we attain, we will not be content with greed in our minds. And even if we do not have too much, we will be happy without greed. Therefore, we must thank those who give us the opportunity to free ourselves of greed by taking from us. Without learning to give, we cannot remove greed. If we understand this subtlety of charity, we will give with humility and joy instead of pride.

The joy from giving can be experienced only by giving. And once we get the taste, it will become easier to give more.

**Sacrifices protect one:** The scriptures say that we must protect ourselves through sacrifice. At some point, everybody will have to sacrifice everything anyway as they will not have the power in their bodies to enjoy them at later ages. Leaving everything by oneself is sacrifice, and leaving without a choice is sorrow. One must eventually take up an ascetic (*sannyasa*) lifestyle by leaving everything. Charity is a practice for renunciation. It is a practice for an ascetic lifestyle before entering it. By practising charity, we get the strength to leave. We cannot renounce all at once, as it will only lead to fear. Charity is the seed for asceticism.

**Reduces the vanity in the body:** The direct consequence of performing charity is that it reduces the "I" attitude in the body. Giving expands the "I" consciousness to the other bodies. It is seeing oneself in all, experiencing the joy and sorrow of all. The "I" is the Soul and is the same in all bodies. If we experience the joy of others, it shows that our minds have expanded.

### **5. *Dama*:**

*Dama* is the control of five sense organs and five action organs. It is to calm them and keep them under control. We feed our minds through the five senses (sight, taste, smell, hearing, and touch). Like the food we eat affects the gross body, the feed through the senses affects the mental body. One's mental strength, weakness, health, or disease depends on the five sense organs. If the mind is weak, it means the food given to it is weak. To control the mind, we must feed it with good things. *Dama* is not refraining from using the senses but is using them wisely. The sense organs must be used for transactions alone and not for indulgence. Getting unnecessary things into our minds builds bad mental imprints (*samskaras*), which will express themselves as bad actions. The mind gets turbulent in two ways:

1. The mind becomes turbulent while the sense organs are engaged with the sense objects.
2. In solitude, when the mental imprints surface, even without any activity of the sense organs, the mind can become turbulent.

In both the above instances, *dama* is necessary. Not using the sense organs when it causes turbulence and isolating oneself from the sense organs when necessary is *dama*. One must control the speed of the sense organs to be calm within.

*The deer, the elephant, the moth, the fish, and the bee — these five have died by being tied to one or other of the five senses through their own attachment. What, then, is in store for the man who is attached to all the five senses?*

- Vivekachudamani - 76

The deer loves music and is enticed by the hunter, who plays melodious music. The elephant loves the touch and is allured into the net by a female elephant. The moth is drawn to the light and gets burned alive. The bees attracted to the fragrance of the flowers are trapped inside when the flowers close in the evening. The fish nibbles the bait and ends up being caught. A man is under the sway of all the five senses. Imagine his plight!

#### **Methods to develop control of the senses**

**Avoid circumstances:** We are generally controlled by our circumstances. And when circumstances unfold, our weakness comes out. Most people, at the beginning of their spiritual practices, will not have the strength to fight their environment or stay unaffected by them. So it is best to avoid circumstances where one will not have any control. During the early stages of practice, association with other spiritual people helps in sense control. We can avoid such circumstances only to some extent, and when we cannot, we must try the next step.

**Do not use the sense organ:** When one cannot avoid the circumstances, one must refrain from using the sense organ where one's weakness is. For instance, we must refrain from talking where we may hurt others or take up fasting where we cannot avoid the situation itself.

**We must inculcate *Ishavara buddhi* in the objects we are prone to indulge in:** We must see the object we are likely to indulge in as a form of God. For instance, one must think that anything he touches, sees or hears is a form of God. If we cannot do this, the next step will help.

**Build aversion:** It is okay to build an aversion to objects in the beginning, to become indifferent to them. We can look at sense objects that give us pleasure as a slow poison. That which brings us joy is certain to bring us sorrow. We must see them as bondage. We must learn to look at the sorrow in the initial superficial joy all objects give us. We must look at them as temporary and a cause of sorrow.

We need some knowledge of the scriptures to see all objects of indulgence as forms of God and to build aversion. With the knowledge from the scriptures and a little dispassion, we must control the senses. In the beginning, we will not be able to sacrifice all the joy we derive from the sense organs as we will not have the mental maturity for it. When one has been enjoying seeing, hearing, tasting etc. and deriving pleasure out of objects, he will not be able to stop enjoying them all suddenly. The desires are too dense and deep-rooted. For this reason, the scriptures allow one to experience pleasure from the senses as long as one attains and enjoys them righteously. If the desire is too strong and if we are unable to dissuade ourselves from the pleasures through knowledge or dispassion, it is okay to experience them, but we must accept the fruits as God's grace (*prasada buddhi*). We must offer it to God first and take it as His grace. If we take any

indulgence as God's grace, it is *dama* because we share it with others. In Hinduism, it is customary to offer various foods, clothes and other objects of indulgence and experience them as God's grace, especially during festivals and celebrations.

We must take up the means of sense control based on where we are and bring the senses under control. Sense control is an important aspect of development and must be practised. Indulgence can never be fulfilled. One only grows out of an indulgence into another with time. Although the control of the senses may look like suppressing our nature, eventually, the sense control will become our nature when handled correctly. Life without control is animalistic. We must restrict the mind's desires, and when we do that, the object will leave our minds subtly. We must practise sense control step by step with the proper approach and knowledge. Even though it may seem like a forceful suppression in the beginning, that is the way to tame the mind and calm it down.

### **The fruits of sense control**

**Purer mental imprints:** By controlling the senses, we create purer imprints in our minds.

**Mental strength:** Our mind strengthens through sense control. The power of a controlled mind can be understood only when one experiences it.

**Mental calmness:** When the sense organs go their way, we will inculcate anger, turbulence, and delusion. By controlling them, the mind becomes calmer.

In short, with sense control, we get a healthy mind that can be used as an instrument to learn the Vedas.

## **6. Performance of sacrifices (*yajna*)**

Sacrifices can be classified as

1. *Srauta karma*
2. *Smarta karma*

***Srauta karma:*** *Srauta karmas* are sacrifices mentioned in the Vedas. They are performed to purify one. These rituals are performed from birth till death and vary based on one's *varnashrama* (caste and life stage). Most of these are fire sacrifices and vary from simple everyday rituals to extensive rituals performed on special occasions.

***Smarta karma:*** *Smarta karmas* are sacrifices suggested by the sages based on the Vedas. The five great sacrifices (*Pancha maha yajna*) are an example of *smarta karma* and are to be performed by all householders daily.

The performance of these five sacrifices is conducive to one's spiritual evolution. These sacrifices help us give back to the world we benefit from. The crux of *karma yoga* is that we do not take anything for free. The sacrifices are a great means to give back. The five great sacrifices help us give back to all the beings we benefit from. For instance, we benefit from cows through their milk. Therefore, in return, it becomes our duty to protect them. We benefit from plants and trees, so we must protect them.

The five great sacrifices begin with the homage to other beings — plants and animals, extending to humans. It is our duty to protect other human beings beginning with our family, and extend it to all. Some humans have attained knowledge by dedicating their lives to understanding the truth. Having attained knowledge and liberation, they have not stopped there. Instead, they have shared their knowledge through writing (scriptures), so others can also pursue the path. We must respect these saints and follow their path. This sacrifice is called *rishi yajna* or *Brahma yajna*. The homage to our ancestors is respecting, worshipping and performing our duties towards them. The homage to God is to worship God by understanding He is the reason for creation.

Though there are five sacrifices prescribed for a householder, Lord Krishna talks

about homage to God here. It is a divine characteristic to worship the power that is above and beyond oneself. We must begin with a prayer every day. Even prayers to fulfil desires are better than no prayer at all. Praying for the well-being of oneself and others is not considered wrong, for it is easy to be on a spiritual path when external circumstances are comfortable.

### **The fruits of prayers**

1. Prayer diminishes our ego (*ahamkara*)
2. Prayers give us the strength to do tasks which we otherwise cannot.
3. Prayers also give us the strength to bear the consequences of our actions when they are unbearable.

In short, this value is offering prayers. We must worship with faith. Faith is more important than the ways we worship.

## **7. Study of the scriptures**

In traditional Vedic learning, the study of the scriptures was done in two steps:

1. Learning the verses (*slokas*) by-heart
2. Understanding their meaning

**Learning the verses by heart:** In the traditional teaching method, the students had to learn the entire Sanskrit verses of the text they intended to learn by heart. At this stage, the focus is on learning the correct sound and being able to recite them without any flaws. The meaning of the verses were not taught at this point, and neither was it the goal of this step.

### **The benefits of this stage:**

- It becomes easy to understand the meaning when one knows the verses thoroughly.
- The learning of the verse serves as meditative practice (*dhyana*). It helps focus the mind and thereby builds concentration.
- Learning the Vedas adds to merits for one.
- The verses can be used in worship and prayer, especially in the latter stages of one's life when it becomes difficult to learn new things. These verses can be used in practices like *japa* and meditation.

**Understanding the meaning:** The knowledge of the Self must be attained by listening to a *guru*. Having attained the knowledge, some express their comprehension in writing. Though books are a good way to learn, they do not facilitate as deep understanding as listening to a *guru*. One cannot remember everything he learns through hearing. Therefore, reading helps one retain knowledge, and books serve as a reference when required. Reading also serves as a good company when ascending the spiritual path. The study of scriptures is understanding the scriptures through a *guru*.

## **8. *Tapas* (penance)**

*Tapas* in Sanskrit means to melt. *Tapas* refers to the practices one carries out voluntarily to mold oneself into a better person. Some austerities help us attain good qualities and remove the bad ones. *Tapas* is a generic term for taking up any kind of hardship. *Tapas* is penance, and to attain anything, we must perform penance. Penance can be any practice like meditation, fasting, non-speaking, going on a pilgrimage, renunciation, or taking up other hardships.

The subtle body, like the physical body, also has a form, although not visible. Penance is to melt that form and change it to a better one. Just like changing the physical body is a struggle, changing the mental body is also a struggle, except it is a bigger

struggle. Anything gross is easier to work with. The subtler anything gets, the more difficult it becomes to work with or change. By taking up penance, we can mold our minds to understand the truth when we acquire the knowledge of the Self.

**Why should we change?** We destroy ourselves by being entangled in delusion, anger, greed and other detrimental qualities. Penance is destroying the qualities that destroy us. There are several characteristics of penance. Some generic ones are:

1. Bearing all the sufferings we encounter and not causing pain to others is penance. We try very hard to refrain from pain, but penance is taking up pain or bearing those we already have without any resistance.

*Patiently bearing all the sufferings, one meets with and abstaining from paining others is the nature of penance.*

- Tirukkural 261

2. Penance is doing one's duty.

*To do penance is to do one's duty; those caught in desires come to ruin*

- Tirukkural 266

The scriptures divide our life into four stages, and performing our duty in each stage of life becomes penance.

**Student:** For a student, living elegantly without indulgence and studying is his duty, performing which serves as a penance.

**Householder:** For a householder, sacrifice, charity, and austerities become penance. A household must earn and provide for his family. When one acquires wealth, he must perform charity; otherwise, he will build greed. The householder must also perform sacrifices, mainly the five great sacrifices and protect all beings. The scriptures recommend those in this lifestyle take up some austerities once in a while to avoid becoming indulgent. One must try to keep the mind calm without using some objects and temporarily removing certain objects of indulgence.

**Retired lifestyle:** Once the duties are over, one must be in penance the entire time, mainly controlling one's speech and food consumption.

**Ascetic lifestyle:** The main penance one must take in this lifestyle is *sama* and *dama*. *Sama* is the control of the mind, and *dama* is the control of the sense organs.

To consolidate penance as duty, we must begin by living a simple lifestyle and study. After that, we can experience our desires based on our mental imprints and indulge if we so desire, but we must do it righteously. Having experienced the desires, we must try to move away from all the indulgences and eventually control everything.

One will be able to do penance only if he has done penance. In other words, we must do penance to do penance. By taking up penance, we build endurance to take up harder penance. Penance is required to attain anything, including wealth and objects of indulgence. One must take up penance for acquiring anything as well as renouncing anything, though renouncing is harder. Without penance, nothing can be attained — be it greatness or indulgence.

*Penance is possible only for those who are already in a state of penance (or through the practices from the former births). For those*

*without such dispositions, it will be a useless venture.*

- Tirukkural 262

3. Another important point about penance is that penance is based on our circumstances. If we are born into a wealthy family in a healthy body, taking up hardships is penance. If we are born into penury or in a sickly body, accepting the hardships of the circumstances is penance. All hardships are penances, either chosen or accepting what is given. For those with one-pointed resolve to take up penance, any hardships, difficulties, or sorrow in their way becomes penance. The situations we don't accept become sorrow, and the difficulties we accept become penance. If we are ready to take up a life of austerities, all failures, dishonour, and sorrow become penance. For him, who wants to lead a life of austerity for him, there is no sorrow. He only experiences bodily difficulties. All other sorrows are taken as penance.
4. We must take up penance. We can start with *karma yoga*. This is the first step and the easiest of all austerities. And we can take up more austerities only by doing austerities.

All austerities are segregated into *tamasic*, *rajasic* and *sattvic tapas*. They can also be further classified into penance from the body, speech and mind. Lord Krishna discusses them in the next chapter.

#### **Methods to perform penance:**

- One must have strength in the mind and body to perform difficult austerities. Therefore, one must do penance, to do penance and build strength to undertake hardships.
- We must undertake only those austerities for which we have the strength. We must not take up something which is beyond our capabilities. We can build up our endurance for hardships through penance. Penance is done to build our strength. We must not become weakened by them. Therefore, we must not perform what you are not qualified for.

#### **The fruits of the penance**

Any penance, when done correctly, will yield two fruits:

**The intended results:** The first fruit of penance is the intended result for which one is doing the penance in the first place, whether it is wealth, liberation or anything else.

**The unintended result:** Many times, when one performs penance, he also gets some unintended results like fame, position, power, wealth etc. When we take up some hardships, we experience some joy also in the process. We must sacrifice these side effects of penance to be able to continue with penance. We must resist the good side effects of penance. Though they may give us joy, we will fall from our penance by enjoying them.

### **9. Straightforwardness**

Straightforwardness is the absence of deception, crookedness, and the intentions to delude others. The value was discussed in detail in chapter thirteen.

### **10. Non-violence**

Non-violence is not hurting oneself or others through thoughts, words, or actions. We must practice non-violence in mind, speech, and actions. Refer to chapter thirteen for



more details.

### **11. Truthfulness:**

Truthfulness is a division of straightforwardness. Truthfulness is the alignment of thinking and talking in a straight line.

#### **Characteristics of truthfulness:**

1. Simply put, saying what one sees and hears as it happened without distorting anything is truthfulness. At times we may be deluded by others into believing lies. On such occasions, telling others what we know will not be the truth. Truthfulness is finding the truth and sharing that. Truthfulness is refining what we hear and telling others what really is true.
2. Not telling what did not happen is also truthfulness. Not lying is truthfulness. It is not necessary that we have to say everything that happened, but when we speak, we must speak only the truth. When a person does not have the strength to withstand the truth, withholding the truth is also considered truthfulness in that case. Here we must note that we are not lying or deluding but withholding the truth when the other does not have the capacity to bear it.
3. In circumstances where one cannot withhold the truth and there is no other option, lying is considered truthfulness. Where there is no other choice, and the lie yields good, the lie is considered truthful under that condition. An important point to remember here is that one must not lie for one's own good. There should not be a selfish motive to lie. The lie must bring overall goodness or at least to the person one lies to. When we do not feel any guilt after lying, then the lie is in line with truthfulness. Not causing harm to others is considered truthful. Essentially one must follow righteousness, and the highest order of righteousness is non-violence. When adhering to non-violence, lying is truthfulness.

#### **To consolidate, truthfulness is**

- Telling the truth that yields good.
- Withholding the truth that does not yield good.

#### **Falsehood is**

- Telling the truth that does not yield good.
- Withholding the truth that yields good.
- Withholding the truth that harms oneself but yields good to others.

Truthfulness is that which yields to the greater good of all.

**What is the truth and what is not?** Truthfulness is that which is in accordance with our conscience, irrespective of whether others accept it. We can make anyone believe our lies except for ourselves. We will be at peace even if no one believes our truth. But if we gain anything through lies, we will be consumed by guilt. Speaking the truth will keep us happy and content, while guilt from lying will destroy us. No matter what we attain through falsehood, we fail by default, and no matter what we lose by speaking the truth, we will be content. If our mind makes us sad, irrespective of what we have, it is misery. It is a joy if we have a happy mind, even if we do not have anything. If we understand this subtle reason for happiness, we will follow righteousness. Most do not see the fine connection between righteousness and the mind, and therefore they cheat themselves and others.

#### **The result one attains from adhering to truthfulness:**

1. We attain purity of mind by following truthfulness. Because to adhere to truthfulness, we must have other good qualities. For instance, one cannot steal and speak the truth.
2. Truthfulness is free of all burdens.
3. Truthfulness is righteousness, and righteousness adds merits. Truthfulness is the path to attaining higher abodes.
4. Falsehood inculcates fear, while truthfulness builds strength in us. With the acquired strength, one can face the sorrows in one's life and inculcate other good values.

**Methods to be truthful:**

1. To build truthfulness, we must adhere to other good values, like non-stealing and straightforwardness, and because of being truthful, we also attain other good values.
2. We can build truthfulness by talking less. When we talk too much, we mix up the truth and lie in our conversation or tend to fabricate. We must not talk about everything that comes to our mind but only talk to convey what we must.
3. Self-honesty: We must be honest with ourselves. When others appreciate us for what we do not have, we must not own the praise. We must be honest and reject the adulations. If we own it, we will lie to protect it. To be truthful is to own only what we qualify for. We must sacrifice the appreciation for which we do not have the merits for. In such cases, others' adulation of us comes from their ignorance and not our merits. Accepting one's weakness and not owning the acclamations for what one does not qualify for is self-honesty.
4. We can practice truthfulness as penance by adhering to it for a day or for a certain time.

**12. Absence of anger**

Anger instigates us into actions which we would otherwise not do. When angry, we think and speak, which we would otherwise not want to. Anger brings enmity, guilt, demerit, sabotages growth, causes poor health, and leads to loss of wealth and relationships. Anger destroys us internally and externally. It destroys us internally by destroying our good values like love, affection, compassion, sympathy, forgiveness and good thinking. Externally anger destroys relationships, external help, health, and wealth.

**Reasons for anger:**

1. Hatred: Hatred manifests itself as anger. Situations or actions involving those we dislike trigger anger in us. While we tolerate any gesture from a loved one, the same gesture from those we don't makes us angry.
2. Attachment: When an object of our attachment gets destroyed, it causes sorrow. That which is the reason for destruction triggers anger in us if it is weaker than us or triggers fear.
3. Expectation: We have certain expectations of people or about how a situation should turn out. When external circumstances do not meet our expectations, it becomes a reason for our anger.
4. Lack of patience: When we lose the power to be patient, that lack comes out as anger.
5. Instrument: Some people use anger as an instrument to attain what they want because most people respond well to anger

6. Ego: When the ego gets hurt, it triggers anger. When someone thinks lowly of us, it makes us angry.
7. *Sattvic* anger: Those who live according to the guidelines of righteousness become intolerant and angry when they see unrighteousness around them. This is also wrong.
8. Habit: Some people are angry all the time out of habit, having practised being angry all the time.

### **Methods to remove anger**

When one is already angry, none of the methods suggested below to control anger will help. When we are angry, we are helpless. We must practice getting rid of anger before getting angry. It is also not possible to remove anger while hoarding other demonic characteristics within us. To remove anger, we must acquire other good values as well. Unlike other values like charity or truthfulness, we cannot choose not to be angry, for anger becomes one's nature out of practice. We must slowly remove anger in steps with conscious practices.

1. Remove hatred: Hatred manifests as anger. To remove hatred, we must understand that all beings are the same at the level of Soul and life force (prana). When a *yogi* or a felon sleep, the sleep is peaceful (when the mind and body do not function). There are differences among us only in actions and thoughts. Only the mind and the sense organs are different for all of us. We dislike people because of their actions or thoughts. But we are not our actions or thoughts. We must see the substratum of all beyond that and understand that no one deserves to be hated. We hate others because we do not differentiate them from their actions. Their actions at that time could have caused us sorrow. But they are subject to change, and we cannot take our hatred and anger back when they do. All beings are good. The differences are based on *gunas* and the actions based on the *gunas*. It is ok to move away from people we do not like, but we must not develop hatred for them. We must practice not hating anyone.
2. Removing excess attachment from objects and people: We must remove our attachments to objects by seeing their flaws and understanding that they will enslave us.
3. Remove expectations: We become angry when a certain outcome does not meet our expectations or if people do not behave as expected. Most of the time, expectation itself is not a problem. We do actions with an expectation of a certain outcome. But what is more important is our attitude in our expectations. Irrespective of our expectations, if we accept the outcome, the expectations will not trigger anger.
4. Forbearance and forgiveness: When we lose our patience, we get angry. We must build patience through *japa* and meditation. Forgiving others will help reduce our anger. To forgive others, we must place ourselves in others' shoes and see the situation with their level of knowledge, comprehension and circumstances. It will help us forgive.
5. Not using anger as an instrument: Anger is not a strength; it is a weakness. We must not use our weaknesses to attain anything. Attaining anything through anger is as good as not attaining it.
6. When others hurt our ego, we must understand they judge us based on their knowledge or ignorance of us. We must protect our individuality from others' opinions.

7. *Sattvic* anger: A righteous person can be infuriated by the atrocities of others. In such situations, we must understand that we cannot protect righteousness beyond our capacities. We are not *avatars* descended to remove unrighteousness and establish righteousness. We are individuals here to follow righteousness. We must follow righteousness and try to protect it where we can and ignore the unrighteousness that is beyond what we can protect.
8. Anger arises from *rajas gunas*. We must move to *sattva guna*. The later chapters discuss more about *sattva guna*.

These are some generic reasons and remedies to remove anger. We must identify what causes anger on a personal level and remove it. By removing anger, we do good to ourselves and others.

### 13. Sacrifice

There are two types of sacrifices — internal and external. Giving away materials to others is an external sacrifice while sacrificing one's bad qualities, expectations, revenge, violence, indulgence, and comforts are internal sacrifices. There are several types of sacrifices. They can be classified as *tamasic*, *rajasic*, and *sattvic* sacrifices. *Sattvic* sacrifices are the best form of sacrifice, and they arise from our discrimination. Sacrifices made from delusion are made from *tamas guna*. It is sacrificing out of ignorance rather than discrimination. An example would be a child choosing a sweet instead of gold when given a choice. Here the child is ignorant of the value of gold and prefers the sweet out of delusion. Sacrificing the chosen task due to impediments on the way is a sacrifice made from *rajas guna*. Any sacrifices made from correct knowledge and self-identification are *sattvic* sacrifices and the best of sacrifices.

One's discrimination matures into renunciation. When one has perfected discrimination, he will attain dispassion. From knowledge comes discrimination, and from discrimination comes renunciation. Seeing all objects of indulgence as a source of sorrow is discrimination, and one attains perfection by practising that knowledge. Desire is the consequence of delusion. Delusion is seeing only the pleasure attributes of an object. Removing desire from all objects of indulgence is renunciation. Discrimination and knowledge remove delusion. Removing delusion removes desire. When the desire is removed, we renounce.

Another reason for the sacrifice is *abhimana* (identification). When our identity moves from the body to the higher sheaths, we renounce lower joy to experience the higher. We leave bad associations when we get better ones. And when intrigued by higher goals, we sacrifice the lower goals. When we claim the stairs, we leave the lower step as we get steady on the higher step. The fruits of sacrifices are peace or any other reason we are sacrificing for. If we sacrifice from *tamas* or *rajas guna*, we will not attain any result. Renunciation can be divided into two:

1. Renunciation as a practice to attain liberation
2. Renunciation attained as a result of liberation

**Renunciation as a practice to attain liberation:** When one tries for liberation, he consciously tries to renounce everything with the help of knowledge. The renunciation of indulgences helps one attain liberation. In this type of renunciation, one knows when he sacrifices. For instance, when one gives away an object he could enjoy, he knows he has sacrificed the joy of that object. He, however, also attains another kind of joy by sacrificing it — the joy of giving. One values the object he has given away, and so it is not discarding the objects. This type of renunciation is the path to the goal.

**Renunciation attained as a result of liberation:** On attaining liberation, one sacrifices the doer-ship. The fruit of liberation is renunciation, which comes from the knowledge of the Self. In this type of renunciation, the liberated do not value anything he has sacrificed. Others may value the objects he has sacrificed, but for him, there is no value for anything he has renounced. And so, he will not see his renunciation as a sacrifice. For this *yogi*, the world is a delusion, and therefore there is no reality in the sacrifice he has made. His sacrifice comes from experiencing *Brahman* as *Satyam* and the *jagat* (world) as *mithya* (delusion). This is the final renunciation, and he has attained it because of attaining the goal.

Here, however, Lord Krishna talks about the first type of renunciation — the renunciation, which is the path to the goal. We must renounce objects, bad qualities, the evil in us, revenge, expectation, anger and our evil tendencies.

#### 14. Peace

*Shanthi* means peace because of the control of the mind. Renunciation results in peace, joy, contentment, and control.

**What does it mean to control the mind?** The mind is an instrument (*karana*), and all instruments should be under the control of the doer (*karta*). A doer is independent with the freedom to do anything. The doer in us is the intellect with the sense of "I". Our wisdom sheath is the doer, and the mental sheath is the instrument. But often, the mind becomes the doer instead of being the instrument. The mind, even though is only an instrument, has the ability to work as a doer. The mind is not a completely lifeless (*jada*) instrument like, say, a sword. The mind has its own nature and characteristics. Peace is when the mind is completely under our control— when it is only an instrument.

#### Role of the mind

1. The mind is the reason we are able to perceive and attain knowledge from our five sense organs. It is the reason for *pratyaksha pramana*.
2. The mind helps us infer knowledge of those which are not directly perceived by analysing information. For example, we know there is fire when we see smoke. It is the reason for *anumana pramana*. The mind helps us in making the right judgements.
3. It is our mind that experiences pleasure and pain. During deep sleep, when the mind is not active, we do not experience pleasure or pain.
4. The mind is the storehouse of good and bad habits.
5. The mind is necessary to attain the knowledge of the Self.
6. The mind is required to perform meditation (*nididhyasana*) to attain liberation.

#### If the mind is not a good instrument:

1. If the mind does not function well, we will not attain knowledge from our senses. We may hear but not understand. We may see but not comprehend. The mind is the power behind all our perceptions. If the mind does not function well, we may either not attain any knowledge or attain contrary knowledge.
2. A flawed mind will not help us infer any knowledge. We can understand far beyond what we see if we have a sound mind. We will damage our relationships and good associations with our wrong judgements with flawed minds.
3. The joy and sorrow we experience depend on the mind. The mind interprets the situation because of which we experience joy or sorrow. A sound mind will not become an instrument for sorrow.

4. The "memory" aspect of the internal organ stores our imprints and tendencies. A sound mind aids in attaining good values.
5. In the last stage of liberation, it is only the mind that is required. At this stage, nothing external can help one. With a flawed mind, one cannot attain liberation.

The mind is required at every stage, from perception to liberation. The mind is required to experience both *samsara* and *moksha* (liberation).

**Methods to keep the mind under control as an instrument:**

All the penance we do is directly or indirectly to keep the mind under control.

1. We must cultivate good values: The better values we have, the calmer the mind becomes.
2. The mind must be trained to become an instrument. Practices like *japa* (repetition of *mantras*) aid in focusing the mind. In certain practices like meditation and *japa*, we do make the mind an instrument without giving it a choice to be the doer.

We attain peace when the mind is clean and focused.

**15. Restraint from publicising other's fault**

When our intellect works fine, it is natural to see others' faults and weaknesses. It is the work of the intellect to discriminate and show us everything as they are. It is necessary to see others' weaknesses to protect ourselves. However, we must not discuss them with others for entertainment or use them to belittle them. When we talk about others (in their absence), we must talk as though they are present and part of our conversation. When we do that, our speech will become more refined.

**Consequences of publicising other's fault:**

1. Discussing others' faults is a type of violence against that person. It accumulates sins for us.
2. We see our own weaknesses in others. When we talk about others' weaknesses and meditate on them, it means we also have the same weakness, except they may not have surfaced yet because of our circumstances.
3. We will create enmity and lose the affection of those we talk about grimly. We all desire to receive and give love. We will lose both.
4. Refraining from talking about others' weaknesses is a penance of speech. It is control of the senses. It is truthfulness.

Though it is a part of other values, Lord Krishna has specifically discussed it as a virtue for us to follow.

**16. Compassion towards beings**

We must have compassion towards all other beings, including other human beings. When we see other people in pain, we must respond to them with compassion. But we must not suffer in their suffering. There is no point in lamenting others' sorrow. Instead, it should make us compassionate. Our minds must be sensitive enough to see others' pain and translate it into compassion within us. Only such a sensitive mind is capable of understanding the Vedas. Our compassion should also be within the limit that it protects us and does good to others. If compassion goes beyond that, it will bring us more suffering than the sufferer.

**Fruits of compassion:**

1. By being compassionate, we build forgiveness and remove hatred. If someone has caused us suffering in the past, the hatred towards them will not go away if we don't build compassion towards them. Compassion is essential to remove hatred.



2. Non-violence: One of the greatest values is non-violence. We become non-violent through compassion.
3. Out of compassion, we can sacrifice for others. We build the nature of sacrifice and asceticism through compassion. Compassion removes hate, anger, and revenge.

### **17. Calm the sense organs**

Calming the sense organs is a part of *dama*. Even if there are attractive sense objects around one's senses, the sense organs must be kept calm. The sense organs must not get excited to indulge in objects around them.

### **18. Gentleness**

Being gentle with others in words and actions is gentleness. We must not punish others more than what is required. To be gentle, we must build other values like patience, compassion and control of speech.

### **19. Modesty**

Modesty is feeling a sense of shame or guilt when doing actions that one must not do. It is the feeling of uneasiness in the mind when doing something wrong or receiving something which one is not entitled to.

### **20. Not doing useless work**

We do many futile actions out of habit. We must cut down on such actions. We use our bodies a lot of times without any purpose. Even though they may not have bad consequences, loose talk or useless actions will lead to distraction and negligence. Without a good reason, one must not involve in unnecessary actions. Many people just while away most part of their life involved in useless actions that yield nothing. To correct this, we must involve in meditation, where the first stage is keeping the body still.

### **21. Brilliance**

In this context, Lord Krishna means mental brightness. It means we must not be in *tamas guna* but must be in *rajas guna*, backed up by *sattva guna*. A brilliant mind knows when to act immediately and quickly and when to act patiently. It acts appropriately by being firm in its decisions.

### **22. Forgiveness**

We must forgive to remove hatred and anger within us. It is easy to forgive when we see others' ignorance and inability to refrain from causing harm. We can punish others for their mistakes but must also forgive them. We must look at all the pain we are subjected to as God's grace. Pain helps us grow, so we must thank those who have been instrumental to our growth. If not for them, we would have experienced sorrow through somebody else.

### **23. Fortitude**

Fortitude is being steady in our chosen goal. We take up goals from our intellect, but our minds must help pursue them. Willpower or mental strength is important to complete any goal. The mind has to be firm. Once we decide and realise it is a wrong decision, we can change it, but we must not change it because of the impediments on the way. Once we set

a goal, we will face two types of hindrances, one is a joy like external comfort (luxury), and another is suffering like a sickness. Once we set a goal, neither should affect us.

**How can we build willpower?**

1. To build willpower, we must set up easily attainable goals first. When we taste success, it motivates us to take up larger goals. Motivation is necessary to build willpower. If one repeatedly fails by setting up a hard goal, he will feel too fatigued to continue. It is best to set up goals in steps.
2. We must change our attitude towards sorrow: It is natural to want to experience only joy and eliminate sorrow. But no matter how much we try to eliminate sorrow, we will have to go through some inevitable unpleasant circumstances. Undesirable circumstances arrive from our sins, and because we are born as humans, it is safe to assume we have equal amounts of sins and merits to expel. Therefore, all sins inevitably manifest as tough circumstances causing us sorrow. Therefore, it is crucial to hold the right attitude in unfavourable circumstances, such as being in that sorrow, accepting and experiencing them. Facing difficult situations helps us build willpower. It is by going through difficulty we become successful. We think we are in sorrow by mistake and could have avoided it. While it may be true in some cases, it is also true that we will face difficulties regardless of what we achieve. It is impossible to lead a life without any sorrow at all in the human plane. We lose our willpower when we think difficulties and success are different. Difficulties lead to success. To build willpower, we must build patience by being in that difficulty and experiencing them.
3. Understanding our reason for attaining our goals: Sometimes, we take up some goals without understanding the need to achieve them, and when we do not see the need, we give up when we face problems on the path to the goal. When a goal is seen as a luxury, we will not keep up through the hardships. We must see the result of attaining the goal to build willpower.
4. External circumstance: External circumstances can weaken our willpower. We must arrange external circumstances to build our willpower. Association with others who have similar goals will motivate us.
5. Finding our weaknesses: We must analyse why we fail once we know that we must remove ourselves from such circumstances. It is easier to meditate and introspect in solitude to find out.

**24. Cleanliness**

Cleanliness is both internal and external cleanliness. Refer to chapter thirteen for more details.

**25. Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is keeping up others' trust in us. It is not easy to trust someone, and when people trust us, we must protect their trust by all means.

**26. Absence of pride**

As we develop good qualities, we may consider ourselves superior to others. We must look at our good qualities as God's grace and not take pride in them.

Lord Krishna says those born with good nature (*daivi sampad*) have these qualities instead of saying these qualities are good nature. Because all of us are born into different circumstances, some into wealth, some into poverty, some in a healthy body and others

in a sickly one. Similarly, we are also born with our own mental imprints and tendencies. Our qualities are the wealth we are born with. Our inborn nature comes out at different times based on the opportunity we get. Even without our knowledge, we create circumstances to express our tendencies. Though they are our nature, changing them is possible, just like changing our physical body. We can change our tendencies based on what we hear, what we learn, how we act, the penances we take up, and the lifestyles we lead.

For some people, certain qualities are attained by performing arduous penance, while others may inherently have it (out of practice from many lifetimes), and for some others, only a little penance is required. The effort needed by one is based on the strength of his mental imprints. If one is born with good mental imprints, it is easy to acquire other or all the good qualities. If one is not born with good mental imprints, it has to be built with lots of effort. We have the choice. Different people have different weaknesses. We must find our weaknesses and work on them. Lord Krishna says all these qualities are seen in those who are born with good mental imprints and build them with effort.

#### The Divine Characteristics

Fearlessness	Peace
Purity of mind	Restraint from publicising other's fault
Steadfastness in spiritual knowledge	Compassion towards beings
Charity	Calm the sense organs
Dama	Gentleness
Performance of sacrifices (yajna)	Modesty
Study of the scriptures	Not doing useless work
Tapas (penance)	Brilliance
Straightforwardness	Forgiveness
Non-violence	Fortitude
Truthfulness	Cleanliness
Absence of anger	Trustworthiness
Sacrifice	Absence of pride

## Verses 1 – 3

Lord Krishna said,

*Fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in spiritual knowledge, charity, control of the senses, performance of sacrifice, study of scriptures, austerity, straightforwardness, non-violence, truthfulness, absence of anger, renunciation, peacefulness, restraint from fault-finding, compassion, absence*

*of covetousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness, vigour, forgiveness, fortitude, cleanliness, absence of hatred, and absence of pride - are all saintly virtues of those born with divine nature. 16.1 - 16.3*



### Part III

## The Demonic Characteristics

The demonic characteristics arise from *tamas* and *rajas guna*, and they harm oneself and others. The reason Lord Krishna talks about these characteristics is stated below:

1. We may have many of these demonic characteristics hidden in us. And as we discover them, we may feel guilty about having such characteristics. It is okay to have some guilt to change for the better, but not so much that we lose faith in changing our nature. We must also not hate ourselves for having such characteristics.
2. We must not justify our nature because of our circumstances or argue with those who point them out to us. Self-honesty is necessary to change them.
3. Even if we have all these characteristics, we must develop faith and make efforts to change them into good imprints.
4. With knowledge, it is natural for the intellect to see others' flaws and weaknesses, but we must remember not to judge others or categorise them as demonic. This explanation about demonic characteristics must be used only for our own development.

### Pride

Taking pride in one's achievements, knowledge, wealth, power, position or social status is being self-conceited. It is thinking or showing one is superior to others and desiring respect from them.

### Arrogance

Arrogance is being disrespectful to others, especially the elderly and superiors.

### Anger

Anger is a demonic characteristic.

### Harshness

Punishing more than what is necessary is harshness. Scolding others, talking about their weakness or talking lowly of others is considered harsh.

### Ignorance

Ignorance is the absence of awareness about righteousness and unrighteousness. Some, out of ignorance, may even have contrary knowledge about righteousness.

## Verses 4

Lord Krishna said,

***Hypocrisy, arrogance, conceit, anger, harshness and ignorance are the qualities of those born with demoniac nature. 16.4***

Having discussed a few demonic characteristics, Lord Krishna discusses where divine characteristics will lead one.





## Part IV

# The Consequences

### The fruits of divine characteristics

Lord Krishna says that divine characteristics will lead one to liberation. Though divine characteristics are not liberation, it relieves one from the sorrows of *tamas* and *rajas guna*. But being in *sattva guna*, one will still experience bondage. It is a divine characteristic to choose non-violence, and that is the right path. One attains merits by being on the right path and performing action confined to righteousness. The merits manifest as comfortable circumstances and riches for one, or they can be used to attain qualifications for the knowledge of the Self. As a result of our merits, we get a pure mind, *guru*, and the teachings and circumstances that lead us to liberation. Only those with divine characteristics can undertake *jnana yoga* because the mind is our primary instrument in this *yoga*. If we have divine characteristics, the mind will be calm. So divine characteristics give us the merits, qualifications and opportunity to take up learning about the Self. They give us knowledge and union with that knowledge.

After one is established in the knowledge, he does not have to make any efforts to inculcate these divine characteristics, for they become the nature of the *yogi*.

### The consequence of demonic characteristics

Demonic characteristics lead to unrighteousness, and such actions accumulate sins. The sins deprive one of good company and knowledge and strip one from any higher goals. Demonic characteristics lead to mental turbulence and sorrow. The goals of those with demonic characteristics will be only to survive, but it does not matter to them how they do.

## Verses 5

Lord Krishna said,

*The divine nature leads to liberation, while the demonic leads to bondage.  
Grieve not, Arjuna, for you are born with divine nature. 16.5*

The two factors that influence one largely are their family upbringing (ancestral culture, practices based on the scriptures) and one's own nature. When knowledge controls and wins over temptations, it indicates one has divine characteristics. And when knowledge loses to temptations, one predominantly has demonic characteristics. In this way, we keep changing through the day from the divine to the demonic and vice versa. Lord Krishna lists more the demonic characteristics.

### Ignorant

In this context, ignorance means the inability to differentiate between righteousness and unrighteousness. Those with demonic nature do not know what they should do and what they should not.

### Lack of cleanliness

Those with demonic nature lack internal and external cleanliness.

### Failure to recognize the truth

Those with demonic characteristics are neither truthful nor believe in the truth. They do not believe in an Absolute Reality and that the world is protected by righteousness. When one does not believe in the concept of righteousness, he also does not believe in unrighteousness and that actions have consequences. They do not believe in the existence of God or God being the creator of the world. They think the universe exists because of the union of men and women because of their desires beyond which there is no other reason for its existence. They take only *pratyaksha pramana* (knowledge attained through the perception of the senses) as a reference; therefore, their philosophies are limited to their experience. And so, for them, desire is the reason for all creations.

#### The Demonic Characteristics

Pride	Harshness
Arrogance	Ignorance
Anger	Failure to recognize the truth

### Consequences of their philosophy

The philosophy of those with demonic nature eventually leads to the destruction of themselves. They slip from righteousness and attain demerits without hope for liberation and peace. And yet they do not understand their loss as they do not know what loss is and what gain is. One must have some merits to understand the real loss. All of us may know right from wrong. But it is mental maturity to understand what one will lose by doing wrong. The repercussions of one's actions are not easy to see, unlike the immediate benefits of one's wrong actions.

When we accumulate objects by deceit, we get the objects. But along with the object, we get fear — the fear of protecting and safeguarding the object. If we accumulate them righteously, we will not fear losing them because we will trust others completely. With unrighteousness, we can attain the objects but without peace.

Those with demonic nature get destroyed because they choose the inferior, giving up the superior. They are deluded by their desires and carry out anything to attain their goals, even if their actions harm others. Having taken human birth, they do not attain what they should and lose themselves. Their desires are lowly and insatiable. Goals to fulfil desires and attain wealth are inferior goals in comparison to goals to adhere to righteousness and liberation. Their actions disturb other beings and lead to the destruction of the world.

#### The real renunciant

Once a king bowed to a sage and said, *you are great. You have renounced everything.* The sage replied, *no, you are the real renunciant. I have only renounced lower joy for the higher, but you have sacrificed the higher for the lower.*

Our emotions toward something or someone are based on our knowledge of them. The intellect decides the goal, and the mind builds emotions to suit the goal. Delusion is a wrong emotion that comes into our minds and intellect because of a lack of discrimination. Out of this lack, one misunderstands everything and holds the wrong

goals. By taking up wrong goals, the one with the demonic nature acts wrongly. By taking up wrong actions motivated by wrong goals, they destroy themselves, others and the world. Having described their characteristics, Lord Krishna describes the state of their mind. He says they may attain power, position, and wealth but suffer inside.

The mind of the demonic has innumerable mental worries and is always bewildered. Their minds are constantly engaged in continuous thoughts. He says they have constant confusion till their death. Though they may have accumulated everything, they will not have peace of mind. Their minds are filled with confusion and fear. Having accumulated a lot of materials, they get caught up in the duty to protect them. Their ultimate goal is to fulfil all their desires and to attain material well-being and nothing more. They do not believe in righteousness and liberation. In such a state, no one can teach them the scriptures, as they do not even have doubts about their way of life. An example of unrighteousness is stealing others' labour or knowledge. When we steal from others, we undergo emotions like shame, dishonour, enmity and fear. The demonic have all these emotions inside of them because they accumulate things through unrighteousness to fulfil the desires in their minds.

In general, succeeding on the outside will appear as though they are progressing, but they have lost a lot more that they cannot see. It is an external success, but when one has no control over his mind, he has failed miserably. Lord Krishna says they remain constricted as though by hundreds of ropes.

## Verses 6 – 20

Lord Krishna said,

*There are two kinds of beings in this world — those endowed with a divine nature and those with a demonic. I have described the divine qualities in detail. Now hear from me about the demoniac nature. 16.6*

*Those with demoniac nature do not know what actions are proper and what is not. And so, they possess neither purity nor right conduct nor truthfulness. 16.7*

*They say, "the world is without the Absolute Truth, without any basis, moral or order, without a God, brought about because of union only due to lust for its cause, no more than that." 16.8*

*Holding such views, these souls deficient in intellect and performing cruel actions engage in activities that destroy the world. 16.9*

*Filled with insatiable desires, full of hypocrisy, pride and arrogance, out of delusion attracted to the impermanence, engage in impure actions. 16.10*

*Overwhelmed with endless fear and anxieties that end only in their death, the demonic regard only sensual gratification as their highest goal in life. Bound by hundreds of desires and driven by lust and anger, they strive to hoard wealth by all unjust means for sense gratification. 16.11- 16.12*

Having talked about the fruits the demonic attain and their state of mind, Lord Krishna tells us how they speak about themselves.

*"I have gained so much wealth today, and I shall fulfil all my desires. In the future, I will get even more. I have slain that enemy, and I shall destroy the others also. I am God. I am the enjoyer. I am powerful, happy and perfect. I*

***am wealthy. Is there another one equal to me? I perform sacrifices. I give charity; I will rejoice." This way, the demonic are deluded by ignorance. 16.13-16.15***

With intense desire comes intense anger. Desire becomes anger when there is a hindrance to the desire. Out of anger, they destroy the hindrances. But what is subtle is that when they destroy one enemy, they create many and create more hindrances.

There is a difference between a deluded and a *yogi* calling himself God. The deluded calls himself God because he thinks he rules everything. It is out of ego. When the learned says he is God, he means his Soul, not his body or ego.

Sacrifices are actions which always yield results, but the motive of the doer causes damage to himself. Lord Krishna describes the state they attain because of their nature.

***Bewildered by many imaginations, entangled in the web of delusions and addicted to the sense gratification, they descend to the murkiest hell. 16.16***

Those with demonic nature think freedom is doing what they desire. But freedom is being able to do what one must. We will encounter both internal and external hindrances in anything we do. Real freedom is being able to accomplish what one must by breaking the hindrance. The demonic-natured do not have any freedom. On the contrary, they are enslaved to their own senses.

***Self-conceited, stubborn, filled with pride and arrogant in their wealth, they perform ostentatious sacrifices in name alone without showing any regard to scriptural ordinances. 16.17***

The demonic glorify themselves and their actions. Self-glorification is a torment to others, and so we must refrain from it.

***Taken over by ego, strength, arrogance, desire, and anger, the demonic blaspheme Me, who is residing in their bodies and those others. 16.18***

***These cruel haters, the lowest among men — I hurl these evil-doers perpetually into the wombs of demons. Entering demoniacal wombs and deluded birth after birth, failing to attain Me, they fall even lower to the most abominable type of existence. 16.19-16.20***

Lord Krishna says He keeps the demonic in *samsara*, causing them to take birth in demonic wombs (lower wombs). By that, they can experience their tendencies and finish their *samskaras* (mental imprints). Those with a demonic nature do not get the chance to be born as humans. For this reason, the Vedas glorify human births. It is rare to get a human body, and we must perform practices to ascend spiritually. Our time is valuable in this birth, and we must use it efficiently to attain the Supreme. We have gotten a human body, and we have the desire to know about the Self, and we must protect it.

Lord Krishna consolidates all the demonic characteristics into three attributes — desire, anger and greed. All other demonic characteristics are because of these three. Desire, anger and greed fester in the mind and make one susceptible to all other vices. Those with these demonic attributes destroy themselves and others, and so He calls these attributes the way to hell.

Though righteous desires are not wrong, fulfilling them increases greed. When the desire becomes greed, our minds will be ready to fulfil the desire, even in the wrong

ways. When one is consumed by greed, one may go on the unrighteous path to fulfil even righteous desires. This is the path to self-destruction.

Indulging too much in righteous desires righteously will also destroy one. Even for moderate desires, we must be careful that they do not become bondage by accepting even if they do not get fulfilled. The desires of the wise do not lead them to anger or greed.

**How can we be sure that our desires do not bind us?** If the hindrance to the desire does not instigate anger and the fulfilment of the desire does lead to greed, then our desires are moderate and righteous.

**How can we remove anger and greed?** We can remove anger through acceptance and patience. Greed is the innate nature of all humans. We do not see the loss greed cause us. Our acquisitions will not be useful to us if we do not share them with others out of greed. It is too subtle to understand the loss greed brings us. What we give to others is what we give ourselves; if we realise this, we will share it with others which will benefit us.

Lord Krishna asks us to give up these three characteristics. If we follow His advice, we will not walk on the path to hell. We will take up practices that are truly good for ourselves. We will progress to a better place and eventually attain the Supreme. Those who do not follow the injunctions of the scriptures and instead follow their temptations will fall low and perish.

Those who go against the injunctions of the scriptures will not attain purity of mind, nor will they attain higher joy that can be experienced through the human body and will not be liberated.

## Verses 21 – 24

Lord Krishna said,

*The three doorways to hell are — desire, anger and greed. They are so destructive to the self and must be abandoned. 16.21*

*Those who are freed from the three doorways to darkness perform austerities for the welfare of their soul, and thereby attain the Supreme goal. 16.22*

*Those who act under the impulse of desire, transgressing the injunctions of the scriptures, do not attain perfection, happiness, or the supreme goal of life. 16.23*

Lord Krishna asks Arjuna to have faith in the scriptures as an instrument of knowledge. He concludes this chapter by asking us to follow the scriptures and do what we must and leave all other actions that we should not.

*Therefore, let the scriptures be your authority in determining what should and should not be done. Understand the scriptural injunctions and perform your actions in this world accordingly. 16.24*



**Aum Tat Sat**

# Summary

## Part I – Introduction

- We can divide all humans based on their predominant *guna* — the quality they are in most of the time.
- The scriptures say that those with predominant *tamas guna* generally tend to have more demonic characteristics.
- Those with demonic characteristics have a sadistic approach to life, deriving pleasure from others' suffering.
- Those with predominant *rajas guna* derive pleasure from attaining objects they desire.
- Those with predominant *tamas* and *rajas guna* are called *asuras* and *rakshasa* in the scriptures.
- Those with predominant *sattva guna* follow the path of non-violence (*ahimsa*). They do not harm others in actions, words, or thoughts.
- Lord Krishna says that those with predominant *sattva guna* will follow the injunctions in the scriptures and will not perform actions forbidden in them.
- And those with demonic characteristics are instigated into the path of unrighteousness.
- We do not see the loss we encounter by not upholding righteous values.
- Only those with righteous values can attain the highest and final goal of human life — liberation.

## Part II – The Divine Characteristics

- Lord Krishna discusses twenty-six divine qualities we must attain through our efforts — fearlessness, purity of mind, steadfastness in spiritual knowledge, charity, control of the sense, performance of sacrifice, study of the scriptures, penance, straightforwardness, non-violence, truthfulness, absence of anger, sacrifice, peace, restraint from publicising other's fault, compassion towards beings, calm the sense organs, gentleness, modesty, not doing useless work, brilliance, forgiveness, fortitude, cleanliness, trustworthiness, absence of pride.

## Part III – The Demonic Characters

- The demonic characteristics arise from *tamas* and *rajas guna*, and these characteristics harm oneself and others.
- Lord Krishna says hypocrisy, arrogance, conceit, anger, harshness and ignorance are the qualities of those born with demoniac nature.

## Part IV - The Consequences

- Lord Krishna says that divine characteristics will lead one to liberation.
- Demonic characteristics lead to unrighteousness, and such actions accumulate sins.
- Demonic characteristics lead to mental turbulence and sorrow. The goals of those with demonic characteristics will be only to survive, but it does not matter to them how they do.
- Lord Krishna says ignorant, lack of cleanliness, failure to recognize the truth are demonic characteristics.
- They are neither truthful nor believe in the truth. They do not believe in an Absolute Reality and that the world is protected by righteousness.
- He says their philosophy eventually leads to the destruction of themselves.
- They slip from righteousness and attain demerits without hope for liberation and peace. And yet they do not understand their loss as they do not know what loss is and what gain is.



- Those with demonic nature get destroyed because they choose the inferior, giving up the Superior
- The mind of the demonic has innumerable mental worries and is always bewildered.
- Lord Krishna says He keeps the demonic in *samsara*, causing them to take birth in demonic wombs (lower wombs). By that, they can experience their tendencies and finish their *samskaras* (mental imprints).
- He consolidates all the demonic characteristics into three attributes — desire, anger and greed.
- He says those who go against the injunctions of the scriptures will not attain purity of mind, nor will they attain higher joy that can be experienced through the human body and will not be liberated.
- Lord Krishna concludes this chapter by saying that the scripture must be the authority for all to determine what should be done and what should not be done.

## Chapter 17

# Shraddha Traya Vibhaga Yoga



Lord Krishna begins this chapter with the glory of faith. He details the nature of faith, its divisions, the root cause, the fruits, signs to distinguish the types of faith, and methods to build *sattvic* faith. He divides food, sacrifices, penance, and charity into the three modes of nature and details them, so we adhere to *sattvic* nature and leave *rajas* and *tamasic* nature behind. He also talks about how to make our actions *sattvic* had we unintentionally flawed them. He concludes the chapter by glorifying faith, saying one without faith will not experience joy here, nor will he have a good path after his death and that it is utterly useless to do anything without faith.



## Part I

# Faith

The chapter begins with Arjuna's question about *shraddha*. Although *shraddha* does not have a precise English translation, it can be translated as faith or the belief that shapes one's life. It can be called the faith that directs one's mind.

To answer Arjuna's question, Lord Krishna talks about three kinds of faith. Lord Krishna concluded the previous chapter by asking Arjuna to have faith in the scriptures. He asked Arjuna to follow their injunctions as an instrument of knowledge. In general, all people fall into one of the four types below based on their knowledge and faith in the scriptures:

1. Those who know the scriptures and have complete faith in them. These people know righteousness from unrighteousness, and they believe and follow them.
2. Those who have the knowledge of the scriptures but do not have faith in them.
3. Those who do not have any knowledge of the scripture and so do not have faith in them.
4. Those who do not have any knowledge of the scriptures and so do not know what is declared right and wrong in them. However, they have faith in the scriptures and righteousness.

The first type of people who follow the scripture and adhere to righteousness are those with divine characteristics. Lord Krishna detailed their path in the previous chapter. He said that they attain the highest possible human joy, and by being righteous, they purify their minds and eventually come to the path of liberation. The second and third types of people — those who have knowledge of the scripture but do not have faith in them are not very different from those who do not have the knowledge or faith in them. They both do not honour righteousness and will descend. They will neither experience the higher joys of human birth nor will they attain liberation.

Lord Krishna detailed the path of the three types of people in the previous chapter. Arjuna wonders what happens to the fourth type. Though some people may have faith in scriptures and righteousness, because of the lack of knowledge of scripture and ignorance of right and wrong declared in them, will they slip into the wrong path? What will their nature be — divine or demonic?

Lord Krishna said those with divine nature will eventually attain liberation, and those with demonic nature will slip further down. In short, He said if one has scriptural knowledge and faith, they will have divine characteristics and those with or without knowledge but lacking faith in the scriptures and righteousness will be demonic. Arjuna's question is about those with faith in righteousness but without scriptural knowledge.

## Verse 1

Arjuna said,

***O Krishna, what is the condition of those who neglect the injunctions of the scriptures but worship with faith? Is their faith in the mode of goodness, passion, or ignorance? 17.1***

In reply to Arjuna, Lord Krishna details *shraddha* (faith). He begins by saying that there are three types of faith. They are:

1. *Sattvic shraddha*
2. *Rajasic shraddha*
3. *Tamasic shraddha*

All of us run our lives based on our knowledge. But knowledge alone will not direct us. Knowledge expresses itself through faith. Where there is both knowledge and faith, there the knowledge will guide us. And where there is no faith, there is no knowledge but only information. Without faith, we do not even attain knowledge. Anything we hear or see remains only as information for us. In short, our entire lives, the choices we make, the situations we create, the relationships we keep and protect — the entire quality of our life is based on our knowledge which comes as a result of faith.

Knowledge and faith are inseparable, for, without faith, no information will qualify to become knowledge. For instance, when a person tells us something, whether that information becomes knowledge or just remains as thought is based on our faith in them. When we believe someone, their words become knowledge, and when we do not, it remains as a thought and does not become knowledge. Faith and knowledge are inseparable, for no thought attains the status of knowledge without faith backing it up. Faith in this context can be defined as listening to someone and, even when there is a possibility to verify that information, believing it without verifying it. Without faith, even the correct instrument of knowledge will not provide us with knowledge. Without faith, even if a thought is correct and has the quality to become knowledge, it will not become knowledge.

Everyone has faith in something. However, what one believes in and the quality of one's belief varies. Believing in the scriptures or not believing in them are both beliefs. Faith alone does not build good qualities in one. Only *sattvic* faith brings one up. With lower faith, one will attain only a lower path.

#### **Where does faith come from?**

Faith is born out of our nature. Faith arises from one's mental imprints (*samskaras*). Out of one's *sattva guna* comes the *sattvic* faith, out of *rajas* comes the *rajasic* faith and out of *tamas guna* the *tamasic* faith. And only those with *sattvic* faith will attain the knowledge of the Self. Even if the one with *sattvic* faith does not know the scriptures as to what is right and wrong, his intrusion will guide him correctly in the right direction as his nature is good. But those with *rajas* and *tamas* faith will act detrimentally no matter how much they know the scriptures. Lord Krishna discussed the six topics below in detail in this chapter:

1. Nature of faith
2. Differences in faith/classifications of faith
3. The root cause of faith
4. The fruits of faith
5. Signs to distinguish the types of faith.
6. Methods to build *sattvic* faith

Everyone has faith in something. Not believing in something is also believing in its contrary. We must change our faith from *rajasic* and *tamasic* to *sattvic*.

### Nature of faith

*Shraddha* is faith. In this context, *shraddha* means faith in the instruments of knowledge. For instance, our five sense organs are instruments of knowledge. The attitude we have towards them is faith. Faith in the sense organs brings us knowledge. Our eyes give us information based on which we act. For instance, if it shows us water, we drink it. When the eyes show us something because of faith, that information becomes knowledge, and we act according to the knowledge. If we do not have faith in our eyes, what it shows us will not become knowledge and will remain only as information, and we will not act on it based on the information. In another case, if our eyes show us water and we approach to realise it is a water mirage, we lose faith in our eyes. We understand that it is only a form. We neither approach it nor move away from it. Because our eyes showed us wrongly, we lose our faith in our eyes at that instant. So, the thought in our mind, whether it stays as a thought or becomes knowledge, is decided by the faith alone we have in the instrument.

We naturally have faith in our sense organs from birth. If someone cheats us once, we will not believe in them again, but even if our eyes cheat us several times, we regain faith in them. Our sense organs deceive us in many ways. The eyes show the earth as flat. We remove our faith in our sense organs only in that instant and later believe them because, most of the time, they give us the right information.

*Shraddha* is loosely translated as faith in English, but it is much more than that. For any information to become knowledge, faith is essential. The important point here is that faith and knowledge cannot be separated. With that understanding, we move to the next point.

### Upanishads claim to reveal the truth. Are they the truth or not?

Like our eyes, the Upanishads are also instruments, and only if we have faith in them as we do in our eyes do their teachings become knowledge. Their teachings become knowledge for those with *sattvic* faith in them. We must give the scriptures the same status we give our eyes.

The scriptures will not become knowledge for those who learn them out of curiosity. They will remain as words and thoughts, not ever becoming knowledge. There is a vast difference between those who listen and those who understand them. Every thought in our mind will not become knowledge. For one without faith or with lower quality of faith (*rajasic* or *tamasic*), the scriptures generate thoughts in the mind, but they will not become knowledge. We call these thoughts knowledge because of the lack of vocabulary. But real knowledge comes from faith alone. For without faith, there is just experience without knowledge. When we do not believe our eyes, what we see will be an experience alone and not knowledge. The Upanishads give us entirely new knowledge about the world, the individual and the Absolute. To attain any knowledge from them, we must have full faith in them. As faith arises from our own nature, we must improve our nature to attain *sattvic* faith. Faith is more important in acquiring knowledge than learning. There are two types of instruments, they are:

1. Primary Instrument
2. Secondary Instrument

**Primary Instrument:** The five sense organs and the scriptures are classified as the primary instruments, for they are both independent instruments of knowledge. They do not depend on another object to facilitate knowledge. The Vedas (the scriptures) are often compared to the eyes for this reason. Just like our eyes show us new objects, the Vedas provide us with new knowledge. The knowledge given by the primary instruments can be

given by them alone. For instance, only the eye can show the colour of an object. When one doubts what is shown to him, he cannot check the colour of that object by using another instrument, like the ears, for example.

Similarly, the knowledge which is given by the scriptures is given by them alone. When in doubt about the teachings, we can use the scriptures alone to verify them. No other instrument can clarify one's doubt or provide the same knowledge.

Lord Krishna says it is the scriptures that are the instruments to provide us with knowledge in the matter of *dharmā* and *adharma* —the right and wrong. When an instrument cannot provide a certain knowledge, that instrument cannot negate that knowledge also. When we keep the same faith in the scriptures as we do in our eyes (or other sense organs), our faith becomes complete, and we will attain knowledge from it. The two instruments under the primary instruments (*mukhya pramāṇa*) are:

1. The instruments of perception (*pratyakṣa pramāṇa*).
2. The scriptures (*śāstra pramāṇa*).

We must have complete faith in the primary instruments and must not get the attitude to cross-check them somewhere else.

**Secondary Instruments:** When we see smoke far away, even without seeing the fire, we infer there is fire. This is the inferred knowledge (*anumāna*). As a rule, fire causes smoke. By understanding this rule, we have gained knowledge. We know the rule because we have seen fire causing smoke through our instrument of perception (eyes). Even to attain knowledge from our inference, we must have faith that our inference is right. Inference knowledge is secondary because we can verify. For instance, we can go to the place of the smoke and confirm there is a fire.

Similarly, someone's information becomes knowledge if we trust them. Here the secondary instrument to knowledge acts as a primary instrument of knowledge because of our faith. In general, many understand faith as completely believing the information from the secondary instrument without verifying it even when there is a possibility to do so.

Faith in the primary instruments acts instrumental to knowledge. We believe our eyes so much that we do not know where the faith is. Here, faith is mixed up with knowledge. When we have strong faith in an instrument, the glory of faith is lost, and only knowledge shines. We do not even realise that we have faith in the instruments. When we gain knowledge from a primary instrument, that knowledge shines through, which the faith accompanies without getting noticed.

What generally happens is we give the Vedas (the scriptures) the status of the secondary instrument and try to validate it through other means because the Vedas are also verbal testimony (*śabda pramāṇa*) received through the words of the *guru*. Verbal testimony can be split into two:

1. **Worldly verbal testimony:** Worldly verbal testimony are statements people make based on their experience acquired through their primary instrument (*pratyakṣa*). Such testimony is the secondary instrument for us.
2. **Scriptural verbal testimony:** The scriptures are primary instruments. The sages say we must accept them as we accept our eyes. The information they provide cannot be verified through other means. The knowledge we obtain from the scriptures can be obtained only from them. And regardless of the background, religion, or language, any scripture that claims that the *jīvatman* (individual soul) and the *Paramatma* (Universal Soul) are the same is considered an Upanishad. We



cannot verify this information anywhere. The statement comes out of a primary instrument.

By listening to the worldly verbal testimony of which some are correct and some are not, we have trained ourselves to listen without believing them all. With the same attitude when we listen to the Upanishads, we naturally get the tendency to verify it. This tendency is called *ashraddha* (skepticism), and it hinders knowledge. Sometimes we cannot verify everything, and we may just have to believe them. The scriptures are like that. The Vedas give us knowledge about right and wrong (*dharma* and *adharma*), and the Vedanta (Upanishads) provide us with knowledge about the Absolute Truth underlying everything.

### **Divisions of faith**

Lord Krishna discusses three types of faith — the *sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*. One's faith is based on one's nature (*guna*), a manifestation of his nature.

When one is in *tamas guna*, he is in a state of delusion. Delusion manifests as valuing something much greater than it should be. Delusion also manifests as seeing that which is not there. When one's predominant nature is *tamasic*, he believes in people and things that deceive him. He believes in those who are not worthy of trust. Those in *rajas guna* lack the correct judgement to build faith in the right things as they are in the mode of action and passion. Their intellect does not work well when they are caught up in action. Therefore, both *rajasic* and *tamasic* faith are lower in nature. Those with lower faith will not know the difference between the primary and secondary instruments.

*Sattvic* faith arises from the awareness in mind. Everyone has *tamasic* faith in the beginning as one has faith based on his mental maturity. As we grow mentally, we will start rejecting lower faith. When our nature gets better, our faith becomes more refined. When our nature moves from *tamas* to *rajas* to *sattva*, our faith changes without our knowledge to a better one. Some people, however, have faith in the right places from the beginning. This is because of the merits they may have collected over many lifetimes.

### **The root cause of faith**

Lord Krishna says faith comes from one's mind. It arises from our mental imprints (*samskara*). The memory element of the mind stores our mental imprints and tendencies. Faith arises from our memory. Our mental imprints have our attachments and aversions; therefore, our actions are based on our mental imprints. We perform actions based on our mental imprints, and our actions create mental imprints. Consequently, we create mental imprints from mental imprints.

Though some people may begin in the *tamasic* faith because of their mental imprints, they may and can move to the *rajasic* and *sattvic* faith. Our nature is fluid, and so is faith. The best way to develop good mental imprints is to follow righteousness and do good. If we do good and accumulate merits, we attain good mental imprints — *sattvic* mental imprints.

### **The fruits of faith**

Our faith runs our lives. If we believe wealth protests us, our goals, and our efforts, our lives, will be directed towards procuring wealth. We will sacrifice other goals to follow what we truly believe in. We design our life based on our faith and arrange our lives according to our beliefs. If we believe in relationships, love, and affection, we will arrange our life to accommodate these. And our joy and sorrow will be based on that belief. That which we believe becomes knowledge for us regardless of whether or not it is true. And because it becomes knowledge, all our actions, attitude, and behaviour will be based on it. Our behaviour, actions, state of mind, quality of life and what we achieve in our life depends on our faith.

When we have lower faith, irrespective of how much good there is around, we will not be able to benefit from them. This is the consequence and glory of faith.

**How has faith helped shape our lives?**

1. The Upanishads are instruments of knowledge. We begin to learn them without any knowledge because of our faith in them and the *guru*. Faith unites us with the instrument of knowledge.
2. When the *guru* imparts the knowledge of the Self, it is only words. The words and thoughts become knowledge because of faith.
3. Believing in something itself is power. Faith gives us power.

**The sage and the sick man**

Once, a sick man approached a sage and said to him, *please heal me by your touch*. The sage replied, *I do not have such powers in my touch*. But the sick man insisted. The sage touched him, and the sick man got well immediately. He thanked the sage, and the sage replied, *it was not my power but your faith which cured you*.

4. Faith is the reason for renouncing. It is faith in the higher that makes one renounce the lower engagements.
5. All worship, sacrifices, and penance must be performed with faith for them to yield results. When they are done with faith, they yield the invisible fruits of action (*karma phala*), which are merits. Without faith, they will only yield the visible fruits of actions.
6. At times our elders or *guru* direct us in the matter of righteousness (*dharm*a). We follow their advice because of our faith in them, even though we may not have the ability to foresee the consequences of our actions. When we do not understand the situation or do not have the knowledge as to what to do, faith helps us make the right choices.

The roots of the tree are its foundation, and yet it is not visible to the eyes. Similarly, it is faith that is the foundation of our lives, even though we may not know it.

**Signs to distinguish the types of faith (*shraddha linga*)**

**How can we identify what kind of faith we have?**

From the effect, we can find the cause. Our actions come out of our faith, and from the actions, we can infer the kind of faith we have. In this context, Lord Krishna has taken worship as the action to infer the kind of faith each one has. He divides worship into three categories based on the following:

1. The deities of worship
2. The method of worship
3. The motive for worship

**The deities of worship:** Lord Krishna says those with *sattvic* faith worship divine beings (*Devatas*). The *Devas* are the representations of forces of nature. Some examples are Goddess Lakshmi, Saraswathi, Lord Shiva, and Vishnu. The sovereignty of nature is expressed through different *Devas*. Those in *rajas gunas* worship the *rakshasa* and *yakshas*. *Rakshasas* are demonic beings ignorant of right and wrong, and *yakshas* are lower beings, usually of the class of demons. Those in *tamas guna* worship the dead and the departed spirits. It is believed in the scriptures that those who die earlier, either by accident or by suicide, roam around until their time in this world get over, according to their *prarabdha karma*. Those in *tamas guna* have faith in such lowly beings. Their faith destroys themselves and others.

Some people respect those with wealth, others respect those with power, some others respect those who have the knowledge, and some others respect those with values. What one respects shows one's own nature and faith. Not just the deities but also the people we value tell a lot about our own nature and our faith.

**The method of worship:** Lord Krishna says the *rajasic* and the *tamasic* practice stern austerities that are not enjoined by the scriptures. Their way of worship is violent and harmful to themselves and others. They even perform austerities that are forbidden in the scriptures. Any penance performed should empower and strengthen one. Austerities that weaken one are not *sattvic*.

Some lowly practices may be prescribed in the scriptures for the *tamasic* people, so they do not perform actions that are even lower and senseless in the name of penance. These practices must be ignored by those with higher faith. Those in *rajasic* and *tamasic gunas* perform lowly penance with egoism and hypocrisy mainly to display to others.

**The motive for worship:** Those in *rajas* and *tamas guna* worship to fulfil their desires. Their attachments and desires are very strong, and they worship to fulfil their material desires, mainly to gratify their sense organs. Lord Krishna says these people torture Him who is within them, driven by their attachments and desires.

#### **Methods to build *sattvic* faith**

Everybody has faith in something. It is only the quality of faith that differs from one person to another. Some have faith in the lowly and get deceived, while others have faith in the higher. To improve our quality of faith, Lord Krishna suggests three methods:

1. We must improve our nature (*gunas*). *Sattva guna* leads to *sattvic* faith.
2. We must serve others. Serving others improves our faith. Knowledge and faith go hand in hand. With faith, we attain knowledge, and with knowledge, we develop faith. Serving others helps us know them and build faith in them. Serving the *guru* and other elders helps us improve our quality of faith.
3. We must perform good deeds to gain merits.

## Verse 2 – 6

Lord Krishna said,

*The faith of the embodied is of three kinds, *sattvic*, *rajasic*, and *tamasic*, based on one's nature from the past imprints. Now hear about this.* 17.2

*The faith of all is in accordance with their nature. Whatever the nature of their faith that is verily what they are.* 17.3

*The *sattvic* worship the Gods, the *rajasic* worship the demonic and the *tamasic* worship the ghosts and the spirits of the dead.* 17.4

*Some perform stern austerities that are not enjoined by the scriptures, given to hypocrisy and egotism. Driven by desire and attachment, they torment not only the five elements of their body but also Me, who reside within their body as the Supreme Soul. Know them as demonic resolve.* 17.5-17.6



## Part II

# *Sattva Rajas Tamas*

Lord Krishna details how one can attain *sattva guna*. He describes it under four topics:

1. Food
2. Sacrifices
3. Penance
4. Charity

He divides all people into *sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic* and explains their food habits, sacrifices, penance and charity they perform.

### Three kinds of food

In general, the food can be classified as gross, subtle, and very subtle. The gross portion is ejected, the subtle portion becomes our gross body (blood, flesh, bones), and the very subtle becomes our mind. Our gross body is made of matter, and so is our food. The body, mind and food are *jada* (lifeless, dull). The lifeless food influences the lifeless body. Though food alone does not decide our state of mind, the subtle portion of the food influences our minds to a great extent. The food we consume dictates the health of our body, and the health of our body influences the health of our mind. Even if the mind is strong but if the body is sick, one cannot perform any spiritual practices. The kind of mind one has is influenced by the body to a great degree. Therefore, to attain *sattva guna*, one must consume food that aids in mental and physical health.

An important aspect of good food is eating in the right proportions. Solid food must be taken only enough to fill half the stomach. The rest must be filled with liquid and air in equal portions. Essentially, we must stop eating when we can eat the same quantity again.

Most people generally go from the pain of hunger to the pain of discomfort from overeating. We must eat only enough to relieve ourselves from the pain of hunger. For *yogis*, even if they do not get *sattvic* food, their food becomes *sattvic* because they consume food in the right quantity. Even the purest of food becomes *rajasic* and *tamasic* when taken in excessive quantities.

***Sattvic* food:** Lord Krishna says those in *sattvic guna* consume food that will prolong their life, promote health, and increase strength. Their food is a joy to eat and also gives joy after eating. Such foods are sweet, juicy, soft, nourishing, and naturally tasty.

***Rajasic* food:** Even *sattvic* food becomes *rajasic* when eaten in large quantities. The foods that cause addiction are considered *rajasic*. *Sattvic* food does not make us addicted to them. Lord Krishna says those in *rajasic guna* prefer food that is too bitter, sour, salty, very hot, dry, and pungent. He says *rajasic* food leads to unhappiness while eating and misery later, for such foods eventually leads to diseases.

***Tamasic* Food:** Lord Krishna says the food that is undercooked, overcooked, foul smelling, stale, or leftover of others that cannot be offered to Gods in worship is preferred by those in *tamas guna*.

## Verses 7 – 10

Lord Krishna said,

*One prefers food according to his disposition. And so will one perform sacrifice, austerity, and charity according to their nature. Now hear from me the differences between them. 17.7*

*Those in **sattva guna** prefer food that prolongs life, promotes health, and increases strength, which is a joy to eat and satisfies them. Such foods are sweet, juicy, soft, nourishing, and naturally tasteful. 17.8*

*Those in **rajas guna** prefer food that is too bitter, too sour, salty, very hot, pungent, and dry. Such food causes unhappiness, misery and disease. 17.9*

*Foods that are overcooked, putrid, rotten and impure, and leftovers of others are palatable by those in **tamas guna**. 17.10*

### The three kinds of sacrifices

Sacrifices can be divided into two

1. Worship — the fire sacrifices
2. One's duty

The scriptures have defined certain rules for performing sacrifices. Some are:

- The sacrifices must be performed only based on the scriptural injunctions. We must follow the orderliness of the sacrifices and must not create our own sacrifices or ways to worship. The Vedas do not mention fruits for **nitya karma** (our everyday duties). They are necessary to sustain our bodies and minds. Only **kamya karma** (actions performed to attain a particular desire) are mentioned along with their fruits in the scriptures. **Kamya karma** are **rajasic** and **tamasic** in nature.
- We must not expect results for our duties. We may perform our duties with certain expectations, but we must accept the outcome as God's grace (**prasada buddhi**).
- We must perform our duties and certain actions regardless of our likes and dislikes.
- We must perform the duties and the sacrifices with a firm conviction in mind.

Lord Krishna says it is **rajasic** when the sacrifices are made to attain material results or if they are performed as a display to others for fame or praise. The sacrifices are considered **tamasic** when they are performed based on the likes and dislikes of one or without following the injunctions of the scripture. They are also **tamasic** when they are done without chanting the mantras properly, or there is no offering or very little offering at the end of the sacrifices to other people or for the learned who performed them. Sacrifices performed without faith in their fruits are also **tamasic**. All action yield fruits and sacrifices are actions too. They produce fruits. Faith should not be confused with the desire for results. Faith is not desiring. Faith is a belief that the sacrifices will yield the results without clinging to the outcome.

## Verse 11 – 13

Lord Krishna said,

*The sacrifices that are performed in accordance with the scriptural injunctions without hankering for the rewards and with the firm conviction that the sacrifices are duty are **sattvic** sacrifices. 17.11*

*Know that the sacrifices that are offered seeking rewards and for ostentation to be **rajasic** sacrifices. 17.12*

*The sacrifices devoid of faith and contrary to the ordinances of the scriptures, where no food is offered, no mantras chanted, and no charity given, are considered as **tamasic** sacrifices. 17.13*

### **The three kinds of penance**

**Tapas** can be translated as penance. **Tapas** means to melt. In this context, **tapas** means to melt and mold our character into a better one. Penance is to bring the body, mind, and sense organs under control. The body, mind, and sense organs are our instruments, but they act on their own (as a doer) because they have their own nature. Penance is done to bring them back under control and make them instruments.

Penance is taking up and undergoing pain to perfect oneself. Those who accept their life as penance will not be limited by their circumstance. They accept all hardships and pain that come their way as penance. Failures and pain help remove the ego and perfect one.

*The mind is ever impure for him whose intellect has no discrimination.  
The one without self-control never reaches the goal but only enters the  
womb of **samsara**. He who has a discriminating intellect and a  
restrained mind does not come back.*

### **- Katha Upanishad 1.3.7- 1.3.8**

Lord Krishna splits penance into three based on the instrument used to perform them:

1. Body
2. Mind
3. Speech

#### **Body**

**Worship:** Worship and services are penance done from the body. When we serve or worship those with good qualities, we will eventually attain their qualities. We develop humility by worshipping and serving others. Serving the **guru** and honouring those who have attained knowledge is a penance from the body. We prostrate those we honour. Prostrating to others means surrendering our ego, and we can attain knowledge only through surrender.

**Cleanliness:** Keeping our body, place and clothes clean is considered penance.

**Straightforwardness:** The action one does must align with his words and thoughts. Doing what we must do and not doing what we must not is considered straightforward and is penance through the body.

**Celibacy:** Celibacy is a must in a student lifestyle (**brahmacharya ashram**) and ascetic lifestyle (**sannyasa ashram**), and one must try to follow it in the retired lifestyle (**vanaprastha ashram**) as much as possible. For the householder (**grihastha ashram**), fidelity is a must to adhere.

**Non-violence:** Not hurting others physically and not enjoying others' property is also



considered penance through the body. We must not enjoy what we have not earned. Abducting others' property is an act of violence towards them.

Other penances from the body not mentioned here include non-stealing, non-hoarding beyond what is required, taking up pilgrimages, following bodily discipline (not being lazy) and simplicity.

### **Speech**

It is through speech one accumulates most merits and sins. And speaking is also the reason for the turbulence of one's mind. As we age, our other sense organs lose their power. For instance, we will not be able to see or hear well, but our speaking ability does not generally fade away so much. For this reason, many talk more as they age. Therefore, it is important to control our speech.

**Non-violence:** We must talk in such a way that it does not hurt others. We must be gentle while pointing out others' mistakes. Our words should not cause sorrow to others. We must speak only to communicate our thoughts and ideas and not to hurt others. Talking carefully without hurting others is penance through speech.

**Truth:** We must speak only the truth. How can we define truth? If we attain knowledge from the primary instruments of knowledge, then it is considered the truth. Direct knowledge from our sense organs is the truth. We cannot declare something we hear from someone as the truth. Such information needs further verification. Whenever we speak the truth, we perform the penance of speech.

**Pleasant:** We must deliver the truth pleasantly and gently.

**Beneficial:** Our conversion must benefit others. We do not have to tell everything that is true, but only those which will help others.

**Reciting the scriptures:** Chanting the mantras and learning the scriptures by repeating them is also a penance.

Other penances from the speech not mentioned here include avoiding excessive talking, avoiding unnecessary arguments, and practising silence — completely non-talking.

### **Mind**

**The serenity of the mind:** Avoiding mental turbulence and keeping the mind calm is a penance of the mind.

**How can we keep the mind calm?** The main reason for the turbulence of the mind is non-acceptance/ resistance to our circumstances. When there is resistance within, the mind will not be calm. To calm the mind down, we must accept our circumstances.

**How can we accept the circumstance?** We must understand that people are only instruments that help us to experience our *karma*. And when we understand that, we will be able to accept our circumstances better. Other spiritual practices like meditation, *japa*, and chanting also help us calm our minds. We have practised being agitated. It also takes practice to calm our minds down.

**Gentleness:** Being gentle to others when responding is a penance of the mind. How can we build a gentle mind? We can build a gentle mind by forgiving and building compassion towards others. We must also be gentle while punishing others. We must punish others only proportionate to their mistakes and not be harsh on anyone. We must build compassion towards others by understanding that many people are unable to control their minds.

**Silence:** Lord Krishna has mentioned silence as a penance for the mind. Our conversations are not necessarily always gross. They can be subtle as well. We imagine circumstances and have conversations with others in our minds. Silencing the mind from

such discussions is a penance of the mind. Instead, we must focus our minds on thinking good things and contemplate the teachings of the Upanishads. We must meditate. Once we get acquainted with experiencing the state of being in meditation, our minds will look forward to meditating.

**Control of the mind (*sama*):** Our mind can be controlled by *japa*. Instead of letting our minds wander, we must control them by giving them some work for a period of time. *Japa* is giving our minds work for a certain period. Another way to control our minds is to free ourselves from all the objects that cause turbulence in our minds.

**Purity of mind:** Purity of mind is attained by attaining good values and removing the bad ones. All practices we undergo to attain divine characteristics are considered penance.

## Verses 14 – 16

Lord Krishna said,

*Worship of the Gods, the learned (*brahmins*), the spiritual master, the elders and the wise, cleanliness, straightforwardness, celibacy, and non-injury are declared as the austerities of the body. 17.14*

*Words that do not cause distress, truthful, pleasant, and beneficial and the study of the Vedas and their regular recitation are declared as the austerities of the speech. 17.15*

*The serenity of the mind, gentleness, silence, self-control, and purity of purpose is declared as the austerities of the mind. 17.16*

Our austerities must be *sattvic* in nature. Otherwise, they will cause harm instead of good. In general, the austerities we perform become *rajasic*, *tamasic* or *sattvic* based on our attitude and the methods we use to perform them. Lord Krishna talks about the attitude we must have on the austerities we take up.

1. Faith: When one performs penance with the faith that it will yield results is considered as *sattvic* penance. Penance performed without doubts about the results or the anticipation that it will get wasted is *sattvic*.
2. Only those penances where the mind is fully focused and involved are *sattvic*. One must not curtail the penance or worship one has taken up.
3. Non-attachment to the material results: The penances are done to qualify oneself for liberation, attaining purity of mind and resilience. Though these are the motives of penance, they are not considered material desires. Taking up hardships to purify oneself does not come under material fruits. When one expects to receive pleasure from penance, it is no longer *sattvic*. However, regardless of the motive, all penances have side effects. They bring some fruit. Penance, when done perfectly, results in *siddhis* (supernatural powers), fame, money, power etc. In the Yoga Sutra, Patanjali, the author, has detailed the side effects of spiritual practices. We must note that they are side effects and should not be the motive of penance. These side effects are distractions and hindrances to liberation. When we experience these side effects, our minds indulge in it and forget the goal. Fame, money, and power are all intoxications and make one indulge in them and forget the real goal of the practices. Many stop their practices when they experience the side effects. But we must remember that penance must be done only for liberation. So, when

we experience the inevitable side effects of the austerities, we must have the power to renounce them. We must sacrifice the joy we get from the austerities. Refraining from the fruits of the penances is *sattvic* penance.

Other than what is mentioned by Lord Krishna, we must remember that any austerity must strengthen us and not destroy us. One must take up austerities only as much as he can endure. Taking up excessive amounts of pain or hardships is *rajasic* or *tamasic* penance. The austerities we take up should not hurt others also. *Sattvic* penances are those that do not harm oneself or others.

***Rajasic Penance:*** Lord Krishna says penance done to experience pleasure or material well-being or to achieve fame, power, wealth, or respect is *rajasic* penance. Some perform penance to show off their opulence using expensive materials for worship, such penance or worship is *rajasic* in nature. One may not even fulfil their penance when performed from the mode of passion. Lord Krishna says the fruits one attains from *rajasic* penance are uncertain and temporary.

***Tamasic Penance:*** The penances performed without discrimination and knowledge, and those which come out of foolish notions are *tamasic* penances. Austerities that involve torturing oneself or causing harm to self or others or performed to destroy other people are *tamasic* in nature.

## Versus 17 – 19

Lord Krishna said,

*These three kinds of austerities (from the mind, speech and body), when performed by a devout person without hankering over the fruits that are material rewards, are considered *sattvic* in nature. 17.17*

*The austerities that are performed with ostentation for gaining honour, respect, and adulation are *rajasic*. Its benefits are unstable and temporary. 17.18*

*The austerities that are practised out of a foolish notion without the correct knowledge, which involves torturing the self or for the purpose of destroying another, are declared to be *tamasic*. 17.19*

### The three kinds of charity

Understanding others' needs and giving them what they need is charity. Charity is very important for our growth because humans are inherently born with greed. It is only through charity we can reduce greed. Charity is also important because, on our spiritual journey, we must arrive at seeing ourselves in others. To see ourselves in others, we must share what brings us joy and feel the joy when they do. Those who have this state of mind have a *sattvic* mind. And such charity brings one joy. Charity is revered and encouraged in all the scriptures.

***Sattvic charity:*** Lord Krishna says one must give as though it is his duty to give. We must share with others as though we are obligated to give them.

**How should we give?** Lord Krishna says we must give without having any expectations from the beneficiary. We must not expect that they return the same or another favour.

**What can be given as charity?** Charity does not have to be wealth alone. It can be knowledge, words of motivation, giving the elderly or the deserved our time and affection.

Replying to someone appropriately or even smiling at someone is giving.

**Method of giving:** It is considered charity only if we give what is useful to ourselves first. Discarding or removing what we do not need is not charity.

**How should we give?** When we give something, we must imagine ourselves in the place of the receiver and give them in the same way we would like to receive. We must give others with respect and honour. Those who need charity may already feel inferior, and we must give them in such a way that it does not evoke more sorrow in them. We must take utmost care that we do not dishonour them in any way while giving.

**Place, time:** The scriptures say we must perform charity in certain places like temples and riverbanks because there were many mendicants and ascetics around these places to receive them.

Charity should also be done in moderation. Charity should not destroy the giver. Too much or too little charity is not *sattvic* in nature. They become *rajasic* and *tamasic*. Only giving to the right person (needy) is considered as *sattvic* charity.

**Rajasic charity:** If we give, expecting that the beneficiary will give us back what we have given them, or in return, help us later in some way, it is *rajasic* charity. It is also *rajasic* if we lament after giving.

Other *rajasic* charities that are not mentioned here are giving with pride, giving for respect or fame, and giving too much.

**Tamasic charity:** Not giving to the needy at the right time or in the right place is *tamasic*. Giving to someone who does not deserve it will ruin them. They may neither honour the charity given nor will they continue their work. Some people may pose as though they need help. In such uncertain situations, it is better to give than not give. On these occasions, even if the receiver is not qualified for charity, it becomes *sattvic* charity for the giver. We develop through charity, and the different stages of charity are: 1) Not giving, 2) giving to the wrong people 3) giving it for fame and rewards or expectations. 4) giving without any expectations at all.

Giving without respect or insulting the receiver is also *tamasic*. For this reason, in many Hindu traditions, the receiver is made to sit, honoured and then given charity. We must look at giving as an opportunity to develop, as an opportunity given to us by God through the needy.

### **Benefits of giving without expecting returns**

Through charity, we attain the mental state of ascetics and of those with pure minds. The charity trains us for asceticism. To expand our minds, we must perform charity. If God has given us wealth, it is through sharing we become rich. Through sharing, we expand our minds. Therefore, we must share what we have with others.

## **Verses 20 – 22**

Lord Krishna said,

*Charity given to a worthy person as a matter of duty, without expecting anything in return, at the proper time and in the proper place, is considered to be *sattvic*.*  
17.20

*Charity given with reluctance, with the expectation of some return or rewards, is said to be *rajasic*.* 17.21

*And that which is given at the wrong place and wrong time to the unworthy,*

*without respect, or with contempt, is said to be **tamasic**.* 17.22



## Part III

### *Om Tat Sat*

Thus far, Lord Krishna split a few aspects of our everyday life into *sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic* and detailed them. He also explained *rajasic* and *tamasic* of the same aspect, so we become aware of them and move away from them. The two important aspects of performing the mentioned deeds are:

1. Attitude
2. Actions

Only these two attributes decide if our deeds are *sattvic* or not. While our attitude may be right, we can make mistakes in our actions. Especially while performing sacrifices, for sacrifices must be performed with at most perfection, adhering to the scriptures. And so, even with the right attitude but because of unintended mistakes in our actions, our deeds could become *rajasic* or *tamasic*. Therefore, Lord Krishna talks about how to make our actions *sattvic* had we unintentionally flawed them.

Similar to how we ask forgiveness from others, Lord Krishna discloses a way by which the deeds can be made *sattvic* when the actions were compromised unknowingly. He says we must begin and finish our worship, penance or charity with the three words which are "*Om tat sat*". *Om tat sat* denotes God, and so if we invoke Him at the beginning and end, the action becomes *sattvic*, regardless of whether there was an unintentional compromise in the actions. A couple of points to be noted are:

1. Our attitude must have been right. Even though there is a possibility of slipping in actions, we have full control over our attitude, and so any compromise in attitude cannot be rectified.
2. Only if the actions have been compromised unknowingly by the performer can they be accepted as *sattvic*. Had one deliberately cut short on the penances or worship, or had there been mistakes because of carelessness or laziness, it cannot be made *sattvic*.

Lord Krishna says the means to change our *rajasic* and *tamasic* actions into *sattvic* is to call God's name. We may either say all three (*Om tat sat*) at the beginning and the end of our practices or any one of them. He says that the entire creation comes from the three words.

*Om tat sat* represents *Brahman*. The words are the name of *Brahman* and have been thought of in the lineage. These three words describe both the *Nirguna* and *Saguna Brahman*.

**Om:** *Om* has many meanings to it. There is a detailed discussion on *Om* in Mandukya Upanishad. *Om* is often referred to as *Pranava*, which means the giver of life and protector. It is considered the best name of God.

**Tat:** *Tat* means "That", referring to *Brahman*.

**Sat:** *Sat* means existence. *Brahman's* very nature is existence.

It is said that Brahma *deva* (Lord Brahma) unveiled the world after reciting the three words, which are *Brahman's* name. And from the creation came the people, the Vedas, and the *yajnas* (sacrifices). Reciting God's name purifies us because if there is anything beyond our ego (*ahamkara*), it is only God. It is, therefore, only His name that can subjugate our ego. So if we make a mistake by mistake, we should not be



guilty or worry about it. These mistakes will be removed, and our deeds will become *sattvic* when we call out God's name.

Lord Krishna says some utter the word '*Om*' and begin their duties. He refers to penance, sacrifices, and charity as one's duties. Generally, any action permissible in the Vedas is begun by uttering '*Om*' by the followers of Vedas. This implies we must also begin our work by chanting '*Om*' by which we bring *Ishvara* (God) into our minds. He says those who desire liberation sacrifice the rewards of their work and seek to be free from material entanglements by saying '*Tat*'. Without expecting rewards for their work (i.e. performing *karma yoga*), these people attain purity of the mind from all the meritorious work. There is no failure when work is done as *karma yoga*. It certainly always, invariably, leads to purity of mind. Lord Krishna defines '*Sat*'. He gives five definitions for it:

1. Existence: *Sat* means existence. When we use the term existence, we use it to define the presence of an object. In our experience, existence prevails along with non-existence. For instance, when we say a pot exists, it means when it breaks, it does not exist. We understand existence in the form level of an object. We always associate existence with an object, and when the form of the object is destroyed, we say it is non-existent. But *sat* is the subject. *Sat* is the Ultimate Truth without ever non-existing. *Sat* is *Brahman's Nirguna* nature. It is used to indicate the real nature of *Brahman*, which is existence without ever perishing. The existence which is placed on the form is temporary and a delusion (*mithya*). That existence is the substratum of all, indicating *Brahman* is *Satya* (truth), never non-existing. *Sat* is existence.
2. Good: *Sat* also refers to good, which can be a good company or people. Anything capable of giving good is *Sat*.
3. Merit: *Sat* is generated from good deeds and meritorious actions.
4. Firmness: *Sat* is the firmness we have towards our spiritual practices, be it sacrifices, charity or penance. The main reasons we are not firm in our practices are: 1) We do not know the magnitude of the fruits they bring. 2) We do not endure difficulties while performing them. Only those who have taken up difficulties have trained themselves to endure toughness. Therefore, to be firm, we must take up hardships and practice enduring them and motivate ourselves by contemplating the fruits.
5. *Karma yoga*: The actions that are offered to God are referred to as *Sat*.

## Verses 23 – 28

Lord Krishna said,

**'OM TAT SAT' — this is the symbol of *Brahman*. The priests, Vedas, and sacrifice were ordained by them.** 17.23

**Therefore, in accordance with the ordinances of Vedas, its expounders always begin sacrifices, charity, and penance with the utterance of *OM*.** 17.24

**Those seeking liberation utter the word '*Tat*' and perform penance, sacrifice and charity without seeking any reward.** 17.25

***Sat* represents the all-pervading existence of the eternal Ultimate Truth. It means goodness and is used for describing meritorious actions. Performance of sacrifice, penance, and charity is *Sat*, and it also means performing actions for God.** 17.26 -17.27

Lord Krishna began this chapter by glorifying faith. He also ends it by glorifying faith. He says without faith, no action yields results, nor will they be good. One without faith will not experience joy here, nor will he have a good path after his death. He says it is utterly useless to do anything without faith.

*Whatever penance, sacrifice or charity done without faith is called '[Asat](#)'.  
They are useless both in this world and the next. 17.28*



**Aum Tat Sat**

# Summary

## Part I – Faith

- *Shraddha* does not have a precise English translation; it can be translated as faith or the belief that shapes one's life.
- All of us run our lives based on our knowledge. But knowledge alone will not direct us. The knowledge expresses itself through faith. Where there is both knowledge and faith, there the knowledge guides us.
- Faith is born out of our nature. Faith arises from one's mental imprints (*samskaras*). Out of one's *sattva guna* comes the *sattvic* faith, out of *rajas* comes the *rajasic* faith and out of *tamas guna* the *tamasic* faith.
- Nature of faith: In this context, *shraddha* means faith in the instruments of knowledge. Faith in the sense organs brings us knowledge.
- Primary Instrument: The five sense organs and the scriptures are classified as the primary instruments, for they are both independent instruments of knowledge. The knowledge given by the primary instruments can be given by them alone. When we keep the same faith in the scriptures as we do in our eyes (or other sense organs), our faith becomes complete, and we will attain knowledge from it.
- Secondary Instruments: When we see smoke far away, even without seeing the fire, we infer there is fire. This is the inferred knowledge (*anumana*). What generally happens is we give the Vedas (the scriptures) the status of the secondary instrument and try to validate it through other means because the Vedas are also verbal testimony (*shabda pramana*) received through the words of the *guru*. In such cases we cannot attain knowledge from the scripture.
- Divisions of faith: Lord Krishna discusses three types of faith — the *sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*. One's faith is based on one's nature (*guna*), a manifestation of his nature. *Sattvic* faith arises from the awareness in mind. When one is in *tamas guna*, he is in a state of delusion. Those in *rajas guna* lack the correct judgement to build faith in the right things as they are in the mode of action and passion.
- The root cause of faith: Lord Krishna says faith comes from one's mind. It arises from our mental imprints (*samskara*).
- The fruits of faith: Our faith runs our lives. Our behaviour, actions, state of mind, quality of life and what we achieve in our life depends on our faith.
- *Shraddha linga*: How can we identify what kind of faith we have?
- Lord Krishna has taken worship as the action to infer the kind of faith each one has. He divides worship into three based on: the deities of worship, the method of worship, the motive for worship.
- He says says those with *sattvic* faith worship divine beings (*Devatas*). Those in *rajas gunas* worship the *rakshasa* and *yakshas*. Those in *tamas guna* worship the dead and the departed spirits.
- Lord Krishna says the *rajasic* and the *tamasic* practice stern austerities that are not enjoined by the scriptures. Their way of worship is violent and harmful to themselves and others.
- Those in *rajas* and *tamas guna* worship to fulfil their desires.
- Methods to build *sattvic* faith: We must improve our nature (*gunas*). We must serve others. We must perform good deeds to gain merits.

## Part II – *Sattva Rajas Tamas*

- Lord Krishna divides food, sacrifices, penance, charity.

- Lord Krishna says those in *sattvic guna* consume food that will prolong their life, promote health, and increase strength.
- Even *sattvic* food becomes *rajasic* when eaten in large quantities. The foods that cause addiction are considered *rajasic*.
- Lord Krishna says those in *rajasic guna* prefer food that is too bitter, sour, salty, very hot, dry, and pungent.
- Lord Krishna says the food that is undercooked, overcooked, foul smelling, stale, or leftover of others that cannot be offered to Gods in worship is preferred by those in *tamas guna*.
- Sacrifice: The sacrifices must be performed only based on the scriptural injunctions.
- We must not expect results for our duties.
- We must perform the duties and certain actions regardless of our likes and dislikes.
- We must perform the duties and the sacrifices with a firm conviction in mind.
- Lord Krishna says it is *rajasic* when the sacrifices are made to attain material results or if they are performed as a display to others for fame or praise. The sacrifices are considered *tamasic* when they are performed based on the likes and dislikes of one or without following the injunctions of the scripture. They are also *tamasic* when they are done without chanting the mantras properly
- *Sattvic* Penance: From body: Worship of the Gods, the learned (*brahmins*), the spiritual master, the elders and the wise, cleanliness, straightforwardness, celibacy, and non-injury.
- From speech: Speaking words that do not cause distress, that are truthful, pleasant, and beneficial and the study of the Vedas and their regular recitation.
- From the mind: The serenity of the mind, gentleness, silence, self-control, and purity of purpose.
- *Rajasic* Penance: Lord Krishna says penance done to experience pleasure or material well-being or to achieve fame, power, wealth, or respect is *rajasic* penance.
- Lord Krishna says the fruits one attains from *rajasic* penance are uncertain and temporary.
- *Tamasic* Penance: The penances performed without discrimination and knowledge, and those which come out of foolish notions are *tamasic* penances. Austerities that involve torturing oneself or causing harm to self or others or performed to destroy others are *tamasic* in nature.
- *Sattvic* charity: Lord Krishna says one must give as though it is his duty to give. We must share with others as though we are obligated to give them.
- *Rajasic* charity: If we give, expecting that the beneficiary will give us back what we have given them or in return help us later in some way, it is *rajasic* charity. It is also *rajasic* if we lament after giving.
- *Tamasic* charity: Not giving to the needy at the right time or in the right place is *tamasic*. Giving to someone who does not deserve is *tamasic*.

### Part III – *Om Tat Sat*

- Lord Krishna talks about how to make our actions *sattvic* had we unintentionally flawed them.
- He says we must begin and finish our worship, penance, or charity with three words which are "*Om tat sat*". *Om tat sat* denotes God, and so if we invoke Him at the beginning and end, the action becomes *sattvic*, regardless of whether there was an unintentional compromise in the actions.

- *Om*: *Om* is often referred to as *Pranava*, which means the giver of life and protector. It is considered the best name of God.
- *Tat*: *Tat* means "That", referring to *Brahman*.
- *Sat*: *Sat* means existence. *Brahman's* very nature is existence. *Sat* is the Ultimate Truth without ever non-existing. *Sat* also refers to good, merits, *Sat* is the firmness we have towards our spiritual practices. *Sat* is *karma yoga*.
- Lord Krishna concludes this chapter by saying without faith, no action yields results, nor will they be good. One without faith will not experience joy here, nor will he have a good path after his death. He says it is utterly useless to do anything without faith.

# Chapter 18

## Moksha Sannyasa Yoga



Gita is a part of one of the greatest epics called Mahabaratha. The first chapter describes the setting of the battlefield and Arjuna's state of mind. Lord Krishna begins his discourse in the second chapter by saying *the one with the knowledge of the Self will be liberated from all sorrows*, further to which He details the path to liberation through Self-Realisation. He declares *karma yoga* as the means to *jnana yoga*. *Karma yoga* perfects one's mind. When *karma yoga* is performed with other practices like meditation, *japa* and control of the mind and senses, one attains the qualifications to understand the teaching of the Upanishads through a *guru*. And by listening to the *Atma jnana* (knowledge of Self), one frees himself of all sorrows. Chapter two of Gita essentially briefly sketches out the entire path to liberation as to where one must begin and where everything ends. Therefore, it is considered the essence of the Upanishads. The details have been discussed through other chapters of the Gita (third to the seventeenth). Lord Krishna concludes Gita in the eighteenth chapter. He finishes his profound discourse by briefly discussing the path to liberation and concludes by telling Arjuna not to grieve.





## Part I

# Renunciation

## Verse 1

Arjuna said,

*I wish to know the nature of **sannyasa** (asceticism) and **tyaga** (sacrifice) and the differences between the two. 18.1*

Arjuna asks the question because both **sannyasa** (asceticism) and **tyaga** (sacrifice) have been used interchangeably in many places. Certain areas of the Vedas declare that some people attain liberation through sacrifice; in others, it is said that it is attained through asceticism. According to the ancient texts, king Janaka attained liberation through sacrifice and Yajnavalkya by taking up asceticism. Lord Krishna talks about both asceticism and sacrifice in detail to answer Arjuna's question. He also divides asceticism and sacrifice into **sattvic**, **rajasic** and **tamasic**.

### Asceticism (**sannyasa**)

Asceticism is a lifestyle, an **ashram**. It is the fourth and the last lifestyle or the stage of one's life; other lifestyles are that of a student, a householder and a retired. Each lifestyle has its own set of rules and duties. A student's duties include learning and leading a simple life without indulgences or earning. Once a person becomes a householder, he must provide for and protect his family, including children and elders in his house. The householder implements the knowledge he has acquired as a student by performing sacrifices, charity, and duties. After being among duties, one retires from them and, in the end, retires completely from all worldly duties, which is referred to as asceticism.

By taking up asceticism, one must move out of his house to a new place, thereby leaving all the binding relationships behind. In the ascetic lifestyle, neither should one be dependent on others nor should others be dependent on him. One is not allowed to keep belongings and must live only by taking alms from others. The scriptures give the ascetics and students permission to beg for living. However, those in other lifestyles must eat only through hard work. The scriptures call it stealing if one lives without making any efforts on his own. Without contributing, one must not take anything. This is overruled for the ascetics. It is the spirit of asceticism to live by begging. In this lifestyle, one does not have to work for himself also, and the scriptures permit him to live by taking alms from others.

These are some of the rules of the **sannyasa** lifestyle. Though the core spirit of the lifestyle does not change, some practices have changed over time. For instance, a Hindu ascetic was not allowed to light a fire, meaning he was not allowed to cook his own food and must eat only by begging. They were also not allowed to have a place or stay in one place forever. In ancient times anyone could go to any house and ask for food. It was the duty of the others (the householders) to respectfully offer them food. In the olden days,

the houses also had provisions for the wandering monks to halt during their pilgrimages. With time, the spirit of asceticism remains while some practices have withered away.

**Why do we have to perform some rituals and follow certain traditions to take up an ascetic lifestyle?** Asceticism is taken up in full awareness after performing certain rituals and following the traditions prescribed in the Vedas. This is because it is the Vedas that prescribe our duties. The Vedas specify several duties based on one's lifestyle and one's nature (*varna ashrama*). The Upanishads tell us that we are born with debt and that we must perform our duties to live, failing which we will incur sins (*pratyavaya dosha*). If we are in a household and do not contribute, there will be distress and crisis for the others. If one does nothing, it will cause turbulence for himself and for the people around him. Even if we do not understand the concept of sins that comes from not performing our duties, we can see the tumults it causes around us when we skip our duty. We burden others if we refuse to contribute to our society. So, what we do is we ask the same Vedas that gave us duties and bound us to them to release us from them. The rituals and traditions essentially request permission from the Vedas to move away from the duties. If the Vedas permit us to renounce, we will not incur any sin for leaving our duties. *Sannyasa* is granted by a *guru* who is well-versed in the Vedas in lieu of them. A *guru* is an authority for the Vedas, and when one requests the *guru*, the *guru* assesses if he has the quality to take up asceticism and may grant it under the guidelines of the Vedas. When one takes up an ascetic lifestyle, he does not have any obligation to protect anyone, nor is anyone obligated to protect him. He is on his own. He has all the freedom. This is the reason for ritualistically taking up *sannyasa*.

The rituals are also necessary for a practical sense. If one thinks he wants to leave his duties to get into spiritual practices and live like an ascetic without performing the rituals or leaving his place, others will see him as a burden. His family members and others will keep him engaged in work, and He may not be in a position to refuse work. If one does not want to feel guilty and at the same time protect himself from society, he must take up asceticism according to the Vedic traditions.

**Why does one take up asceticism?** The main reason for taking up asceticism is to utilise the time for spiritual progress.

**For what is the time required?** Time is required to tame one's mind to attain purity. When one lives in this world, there are a lot of objects he indulges in. But eventually, when he loses interest in them and is unable to derive pleasure from the circumstance or objects around him, he develops dispassion. At this point, one's dispassion may not be complete. But he has begun to appreciate the joy from leaving more than indulging. He has realised everything is temporary and wants to set goals on something permanent, and he rearranges his life to suit that goal. When one is amidst duties, the mind is constantly turbulent, with very little time to think about anything else and build discrimination. When one realises he needs time to perform spiritual practices and build dispassion, he chooses to leave everything in search of permanence. Out of discrimination, when one builds dispassion, he may leave all his duties to build it further. One may leave all his duties and take up asceticism to build discrimination and dispassion through various practices with the final goal of achieving liberation.

To perform meditation or other spiritual practices, one needs a lot more regulation like correct food, sleep etc., which is hard to get when one is amidst duties. Therefore, one may have to leave all duties to create suitable circumstances to meditate and attain knowledge. This is called *vividisha sannyasa*. Taking up an ascetic lifestyle to attain qualification for knowledge and thereby attaining knowledge is *vividisha sannyasa*.

While one takes this up, he may not have the knowledge but the qualifications for the ascetic lifestyle by having built discrimination and dispassion to some extent. These ascetics will not have perfected themselves and will have flaws at this stage, for they are only aspirants. In general, some take up asceticism to build dispassion and discrimination.

Some people may have attained some kind of perfection (discrimination and dispassion) by being in other lifestyles. They may not have taken up *sannyasa* because of their *prarabdha karma* but will be involved in *jnana yoga* (*sravana* and *manana*) without formally taking up asceticism.

Though they may have attained the knowledge of the Self, their discrimination may not last long because of the old habits and patterns (*samskaras*). It becomes necessary to perform *nididhyasana* (meditation) to standstill in the newly attained knowledge, and solitude is very important for this. One cannot build non-attachment by constantly being associated with others, especially with one's family. After finishing the duties and attaining knowledge, one takes up *sannyasa* called *vidvat sannyasa* to stand still in that knowledge.

### The two types of *sannyasa*

1. *Vividisha sannyasa*, taken up to attain knowledge
2. *Vidvat sannyasa* to stand still in that knowledge.

These are the only two reasons why the Vedas permit taking up *sannyasa*.

Some take up asceticism and do service in the *ashram* and for the *guru* without expecting anything in return. Some may even be in service their entire life. This is not wrong because they may require it. They do not have so much mental impurities to expect returns for their work but, at the same time, also do not have the mental maturity to leave work and contemplate the Soul. Some may be in between for many lifetimes, which is not wrong.

Many people think that the ascetic lifestyle is chosen by those who cannot work or succeed in other lifestyles because they do not have the competency for it. But an ascetic lifestyle is the greatest lifestyle as it helps one achieve the highest goal.

In reply to Arjuna's question, Lord Krishna first details others' opinions of renunciation (*tyaga*) and asceticism (*sannyasa*). He says some sages say that renouncing work that is induced by desire is asceticism, while others say renouncing all duties altogether is asceticism. Sacrifice is renouncing the fruits of action, while asceticism is declared as leaving some actions or all of them. Asceticism is at the action level, while sacrifice is at the attitude level.

In the third chapter, Lord Krishna detailed several *karmas*. *Kamyakarma* is actions intrigued by desires. *Nityakarma* is daily work for maintaining oneself, like bathing, cleaning etc. *Naimittikakarma* is duties triggered by incidents like birth, death, etc. *Nishidhakarma* is forbidden actions, mainly violence to others. *Prayaschittakarma* is actions performed as compensation for one's suffering or sins.

We must understand that when the sages speak of asceticism as renouncing actions triggered by desire, it means renouncing *kamyakarma*, *nishidakarma* and *prayaschittakarma* and only performing their duties. An ascetic must accept all suffering and must not try to evade the hardships through *prayaschittakarma* (compensatory actions). If one leaves the three *karmas* and performs only his duties, then even a householder is an ascetic. In this context, the word asceticism does not indicate a lifestyle.

According to some sages, asceticism means leaving everything, including duties. However, this does not mean leaving actions that are performed to sustain oneself.

*Tyaga* (sacrifice) means sacrificing the fruits of all actions we perform. It is in the

level of mind. Even if we renounce the fruits of our actions mentally, we may still experience them materially. When we experience the fruits of our actions, we must accept them as God's grace (with *prasada buddhi*). Here sacrifice is complete acceptance without conditions or demands. Even if one acts out of desire, when he accepts the outcome and receives them with full acceptance, it is considered a sacrifice.

**Why do some ascetics leave all actions?** Some ascetics leave all actions because all actions inherently have flaws. Actions come along with defects that can result in difficulties. We create our circumstances and build relationships that bind us, and we engage in duties to protect them. An ascetic, however, does not have duties, nor does he have duties based on his *varna ashrama*. There is no *varna* or *ashrama* for a *sannyasi*. Not being in any other lifestyle is *sannyasa*. A lifestyle without a lifestyle is asceticism.

**The flaws of action:**

- Any action one gets involved in gives him a sense of doer-ship. And when he thinks, "I am the doer", he also experiences the fruits of his actions. Even the most meritorious action binds one. Out of the merits comes the *prarabdha karma*, and to experience good circumstances, one needs a body.
- To perform any action, we need materials. One gets involved in acquiring materials — wealth, property or objects to perform the action.
- Any action will result in some degree of violence to others.
- Responsibilities and duties take a lot of time.
- As long as one has duties, his mind will be turbulent.
- Work affects the body. One may not be able to get sufficient rest.

The flaws come out of all actions, similar to branches coming out of the seeds without effort.

Although actions have flaws, Lord Krishna insists that we perform our duties, for inaction has even bigger flaws. Only those with absolute mental purity and maturity can renounce all actions.

Lord Krishna says that He uses both asceticism and sacrifice interchangeably without distinctions. There are no differences between asceticism and sacrifice, except that one is a lifestyle and the other is not. But renunciation is common in both, and so are their fruits. Renouncing everything and taking up asceticism is not for all. Not everybody has the mental maturity for it. So, in general, it is advised that one must not leave his duties and take up *sannyasa*.

We must take up what suits us. In general, being among duties is good for most. Without duties, we will not have internal inspiration and will slip into *tamas guna*. Therefore, we must not relinquish actions like sacrifices, charities, austerities or duties.

Knowledge cannot purify one; only actions can. If we renounce everything without mental maturity, we will become self-deluded. However, there is no loss for one who performs his duties even after attaining mental maturity. Some may take up *sannyasa* and may serve others in that lifestyle to purify themselves. Through fulfilling our duties, we move from *tamas guna* to *rajas guna* and then to *sattva guna*.

Until we get the power to spend our time correctly, we must be doing our duties. When we do not trouble ourselves or others, we have attained mental maturity. Until we have complete control over ourselves, including our speech, we must not leave our duties.

## Verses 2 – 5

Lord Krishna said,

*Giving up actions motivated by desire is understood as **sannyasa** (asceticism) by the sages and relinquishing the fruits of all actions is declared as **tyaga** (sacrifice) by the wise. 18.2*

*Some learned declare that all actions should be relinquished as evil, while others say that acts of sacrifice, charity, and penance should not be renounced. 18.3*

*Hear from me about My conclusion about renunciation. Verily, renunciation has been declared to be of three kinds. 18.4*

*Acts of sacrifice, charity and austerity should not be given up but must be performed. For verily, sacrifice, charity, and austerity purify even the wise. 18.5*

Having talked about the importance of being among duty, Lord Krishna talks about how we must perform them. He reiterates **karma yoga** as the ideal way to perform our duties. Everyone is a **karta** (doer) and a **bhokta** (enjoyer). Anything we do either makes us a doer or an enjoyer. For instance, while cooking, we are **karta** (doer), and while eating, we are the **bhokta** (enjoyer). Either we are involved in doing something, or we are involved in experiencing the fruits of our actions. Lord Krishna says while we are doers, we must perform our duties non-attached, dedicated and without any attraction or aversion. And as an enjoyer, we must accept the fruits of our actions as God's grace without attachment. We must also renounce the right over the beneficiaries. Lord Krishna declares one must not renounce all his duties and take up asceticism but must perform the duties as **karma yoga**.

## Verse 6

Lord Krishna said,

*And even these activities (sacrifices, charity, austerity) must be performed without attachment and expectation for rewards. This is My certain and supreme conviction. 18.6*

Lord Krishna describes three types of asceticism — **sattvic sannyasa**, **rajasic sannyasa**, and **tamasic sannyasa**.

**What is **tamasic sannyasa**?**

If one renounces out of delusion, it is **tamasic sannyasa**. If one renounces out of ignorance or because of contrary knowledge, then he is taking up **tamasic** asceticism. Sometimes people do not fulfil their duties because of indolence. These people are unaware that duties purify one. When one renounces his duties because of ignorance, indolence, negligence, delusion or contrary knowledge, then his renunciation is **tamasic** in nature. Therefore, most **gurus** do not suggest that we renounce our duties and embrace asceticism. Taking up **tamasic** asceticism is a waste of time. It is not useful to oneself or others.

**What is **rajasic sannyasa**?**

Some people know their duties, and yet they renounce them because it may be hard to fulfil. These people are not ready for any hardships or struggles. They are generally attached to their bodies and do not like to strain them. They want to look after their bodies well and so renounce their duties. Work is difficult, and these people fear work. Going through hardship is one thing, and fearing hardship is another. These people leave all



duties because they fear the difficulties their duty may bring them.

In general, the more hardships and difficulties one takes up, the more one progresses spiritually. Those who take up asceticism to escape difficulties or out of fear take up *rajasic sannyasa*.

Those in *tamas guna* are, however, not attached to their bodies also. Both *tamasic* and *rajasic sannyasa* will not yield any result. They will not attain the fruits of *sannyasa*. Only those taking up *sattvic sannyasa* will experience the rewards for their sacrifice.

Sacrifice is renouncing what one values. By giving away something, if one gets a sense of loss in mind, then it is a sacrifice. Sacrificing is leaving something that brings one joy. The loss of joy at the time of renouncing denotes that one has sacrificed, and many people are not ready to experience that loss.

**What are the fruits of sacrificing, as it is apparent that renouncing leads to loss of joy?** The Upanishads declare that if indulging in an object brings one joy, renouncing it brings one much more joy — the joy that is a hundred times more in magnitude. By sacrificing something, we feel the loss and sorrow temporarily, but eventually, the joy because of leaving is much more. The joy one attains by sacrificing something is a lot more than experiencing the object. It takes mental maturity to understand the joy of sacrificing. The fruit of sacrifice, therefore, is attaining much more joy and fulfilment by renouncing something than having it. Ordinary minds do not have the ability to comprehend the joy of renouncing. An ordinary mind only thinks that indulgence brings pleasure. An intellect taken over by *rajas* and *tamas guna* thinks keeping everything for oneself is joy. A *sattvic* mind understands the higher joy, and mental strength one attains through sacrifice. Even though there may be some suffering for some time when one renounces, the ultimate everlasting joy is much higher, and that is the reward for sacrificing.

Lord Krishna says the ultimate reward of sacrifice is liberation — the state of fearlessness, purity and peace. Even if we are not able to renounce everything, we can begin our sacrifices by giving in, forgiving and giving charity — they are also sacrifices.

## Verses 7 – 8

Lord Krishna said,

*Verily, the renunciation of prescribed duties is not suggested; abandoning them because of delusion is said to be *tamasic* in nature.* 18.7

*Giving up prescribed duties out of fear of bodily discomfort or because they may be painful is *rajasic* renunciation. Such renunciation does not yield any fruits.* 18.8

The asceticism taken out of delusion is *tamasic* asceticism. The asceticism taken because of the fear of sorrow is *rajasic* asceticism. Lord Krishna says the asceticism taken up instigated by discrimination and, therefore, having attained dispassion through the right knowledge is *sattvic* asceticism.

One may experience dispassion during a loss or a failure. During these times, we see the uncertainties and impermanence of everything. But eventually, when the situation heals or changes, our desires can be triggered by encountering the object of our indulgence, and the dispassion disappears.

The right kind of dispassion is attained through the right knowledge and



understanding of objects' nature. Any object that we derive pleasure from will certainly cause us sorrow. Most people have the capacity to see only the joy they can derive from the objects. The more joy we get from something, the more sorrow we will experience from it eventually or from the loss of it. Discrimination is the ability to see the suffering the objects/people can bring us.

One must renounce something only after knowing the magnitude of pleasure he can derive from that object if he indulges in it. And one must sacrifice only as much as one can and has the power for. It is superior to leave everything, but one must first see if he has the power to do that. Only if a person can spend all his time in a *sattvic* state of mind should he leave everything and take up complete asceticism. If one renounces beyond one's power, he will be in a *rajasic* and *tamasic* state of mind. Therefore, when Lord Krishna talks about *sattvic sannyasa*, He does not mean leaving everything and becoming an ascetic. Instead, He insists on being among duties, performing them with the correct attitude and renouncing their fruits. When actions are performed this way, it becomes sacrifice (*tyaga*). In this context, it is *karma phala sannyasa* rather than *karma sannyasa*, i.e., renouncing the fruits of our actions rather than renouncing actions. Leaving all our duties or renouncing only the fruits from them are both *sattvic* sacrifices, and they both yield the same results.

### What are the fruits of *sattvic sannyasa*?

The ultimate fruit of *sattvic sannyasa* is liberation. Lord Krishna details how *sattva* (the mode of goodness) leads us to liberation in the below four steps:

1. By attaining a *sattvic* mind, one attains discriminating abilities.
2. From discrimination comes dispassion. From discrimination comes renunciation (either everything or the fruits of their actions).
3. The fruits of sacrifice lead one to the knowledge of the Self (*Atma jnana*). Though the sacrifices themselves will not inculcate knowledge, it leads one to the *guru* and the scriptures. And it is said that the sacrifices protect one through the process of acquiring knowledge and eventually lead one to liberation.
4. Having led to knowledge, sacrifices performed by one cut out any doubts and make him steady in that knowledge. One's sacrifices protect and walk one till the final goal.

To reach the final goal steadily, one must have truly given in to others and lived a life without selfishness. Had one not lived a righteous life by performing sacrifices, there will be several hindrances on the path, and he cannot reach the final goal. Sacrifice is the root of liberation.

### Fruits of Sattvic Sannyasa



A mind without dualities — without attachment and aversion, including the matters of righteousness and unrighteousness, is the fruit of sacrifice. When we begin on the spiritual path, we try to remove attachment and aversion from the mind with effort. For instance, we may desire something, but we try not to act on our desire with the help of knowledge. We control the desire and sacrifice them. Similarly, we also control ourselves by not giving in to hate or violence out of aversion. This is a stage of practice. However, the non-duality Lord Krishna talks about here is the result of liberation, where

one does struggle to leave dualities, but the dualities leave him. One has then crossed all dualities having understood the delusive nature of everything, and is truly liberated from them. He neither has an aversion towards arduous actions nor does he have an attraction to comfort and pleasurable actions. Neither does he hate sin, nor does he love virtue. For the liberated, there is no attachment to righteousness or unrighteousness.

## Verses 9 – 10

Lord Krishna said,

*Obligatory actions that are performed as duties because they ought to be done, giving up attachment and abandoning their fruits, are regarded as **sattvic**. 18.9*

*The **sattvic** renunciant, pervaded by intelligence and purity of mind, is free of all doubts. He neither disdains disagreeable actions nor is attached to the agreeable ones. 18.10*

Lord Krishna, having talked about the glory of renunciation, says the ignorant cannot renounce. Those without the knowledge of the Self cannot renounce, and even if they do, it will be from **rajas** or **tamas gunas**. He says such renunciation will not last long, nor will it yield any fruits.

Those ignorant of the Soul, attached to the body, will not have the power to renounce. Those who carry the burden of the body carry it with pride and will not be able to leave actions. It is the nature of the body to always be in action. Even during sleep, the body is in action. Desire, greed, and jealousy are the nature of the mind. When one thinks he is the body and the mind, he takes up their characteristics. The **dharma** of the body and the mind becomes his. With the body acting and the mind desiring, one cannot leave actions. He acts to satisfy the desire in his mind through the action-oriented body.

**What should an ignorant do?** The ignorant should not renounce actions but only sacrifice the fruits from them. By that, he becomes a **tyagi** (one who sacrifices). If one forsakes all actions, he will lose the instrument that purifies him. That is not good for one or those around him. It is difficult and a burden to live without any responsibilities. However, one does not need the fruits of his actions.

Lord Krishna, having talked about the result of sacrifices which is the ultimate peace of mind through liberation, discusses the path the **sattvic** renunciant takes after death. He compares it to the path of an ignorant.

In general, the fruits of our actions can be split into two: the fruits we experience here in this birth and those we do after death. The fruits the liberated experience are the contentment and joy in the mind without the dualities as long as his **prarabdha karma** finishes in this birth.

Lord Krishna describes the path the ignorant take after death. He says they could get three kinds of fruits after death:

1. The undesirable fruits: Those who have accumulated more sins go to the lower realms. The scripture talks about several such lower realms, and collectively, they are referred to as hell. These abodes are full of sorrow. Some may also take a lower birth in our abode as animals or plants, for they cannot even experience as much joy as humans can.
2. Desirable fruits: Those with more merits are born into higher abodes or heavenly abodes and will have more circumstances to enjoy. Like everything else within

manifestation, these are also temporary abodes, and one must return after his *karma* in higher abodes is over.

3. Rebirth: When one's merits and demerits are about equal, he is reborn as a human. In a birth which happens because of the combination of merits and demerits, sorrow and joy are inevitable. One will not experience only joy all through his life, nor will he experience only sorrow always. After the *karma* for suffering is over, even the instruments (people, circumstances) that cause one suffering will not have the power to cause him any more sorrow. Even if one wants to suffer after his *karma* is over, he cannot suffer. He will start seeing comfort in that suffering.

The ignorant keep taking one or the other path after death. Essentially, those who do not sacrifice while they live in *samsara* are born again into *samsara*.

Lord Krishna says a renunciant who stands steadfast in his knowledge does not go through any of these paths. A *sannyasi* is an *agathi*. They do not have a path after their death, and their death is the final death. Their gross body mixes up with the five primordial elements, and their subtle body mixes with the deities of the five subtle primordial elements. They do not take up any more bodies. They will be *Atmaswaroopa*.

## Verses 11 – 12

Lord Krishna said,

*Verily it is not possible for the embodied to give up actions entirely, but by relinquishing the rewards of actions, one is said to have truly renounced. 18.11*

*The three-fold fruits of actions that occur after death for those attached to the rewards of their action are desirable (the heavenly), the undesirable (the hellish), and the mixed (human world), but never for the renunciant. 18.12*



## Part II

# Reasons for Actions

Lord Krishna consolidates *jnana yoga*. He says those who know the Self are not bound but attain liberation. Lord Krishna describes the Soul as *akarta* and *abhokta*, which means the Soul is a non-doer and non-experiencer. This was explained in chapter two by saying the Soul neither slays nor gets slayed.

One experiences one kind of sorrow while performing actions and another kind while experiencing the fruits. Essentially, one is a *samsari* when he acts as well as when he experiences the fruits. Sorrow is an integral part of *samsara*. It only changes from one to another without ever leaving. The Soul being a non-doer and a non-experiencer, is not a *samsasri*. When we are a doer, most of the time, guilt becomes the reason for sorrow. When we are an experiencer, hurt becomes the reason for sorrow. When one is neither a doer nor an experiencer, neither is there guilt nor is there hurt.

When one removes the doership from all his actions, he cannot be touched by any *karma*. And only through the knowledge of the Self can all actions cease from one. The knowledge bestows upon us the attitude of renunciation as its fruits. For instance, it comes naturally for us to indulge in delicious food in front of us. But if we come to know the food is contaminated, we will not act. The knowledge about the food caused the cessation of action.

The scriptures which give us such knowledge are called *krithantam*. *Krithantam* is a section of the Vedas that provide the knowledge because of which all *karmas* end. It is the place where the *Atma jnana* is detailed.

### What are the reasons for actions?

Lord Krishna states five reasons for any action, which are also stated in the Upanishads. He says for any action to arise, all five reasons must be present.

1. Gross body: Gross body, known as the *annamaya kosha* is the food sheath. A particular organ of the physical body is required to do a particular action. For instance, to walk, legs are needed. Our gross body stands as proof of all our actions. For one to exist as a doer and an experiencer, the gross body plays the root cause. When the gross body is sick or not available, one cannot perform any actions.
2. Lifeforce: Also referred to as *prana*, Lord Krishna talks about *pranamaya kosha*. The energy sheath. There are five different *pranas* which perform different functions in the body. *Pranamaya kosha* is not the physical body but provides power to the physical body. Without the aid of the life force, we cannot perform any work.
3. The Instrument: The five sense and action organs controlled by the mind, including our memory, are the instruments. They come under *manomaya kosha*. The mind controls all the organs, and the memory is an integral part of any action, without which one cannot perform any action.

4. The doer: The intellect, along with the ego that says, "I am the doer," referred to as the *viññanamaya kosha*, owns up for all the action one does.

Four of the five elements necessary to perform any action are our sheaths — *kosha*. However, the fifth sheath — the *anandamaya kosha* is not a reason for action. *Anandamaya kosha* is like a space that contains everything yet is uninvolved and unattached. *Anandamaya kosha* is our causal body. It is the reason for our other bodies, but the causal body does not act. The four reasons out of five are essentially our gross body and our subtle body, which are the direct reasons for our actions. Lord Krishna says that the fifth reason for our action is *Ishvara*.

5. *Ishvara*: *Ishvara* (God) is the fifth reason for all action. Even if all other reasons for actions are present, without *Ishvara*, one cannot act. *Ishvara* is the underlying law of all our actions.

#### **What kind of reason are the five elements above for an action?**

We can segregate the five reasons for the actions into two:

1. General reason (*Smanaya karana*)
2. Special reason (*Vishesha karana*)

**General reason:** General reason is that which is common for all. For instance, the soil, sunshine, and weather conditions are common for all crops in a field.

**Special reason:** Special reason is unique to a particular individual. For instance, the individual seed dictates the quality of the crop. Some crops yield better under the same conditions. That is because of the special reason.

*Ishvara*, like the field, is the general reason and the individual's imprints (*samskaras*) and tendencies (*vasanas*) are the special reason for their actions. Whether the actions that come out of an individual are righteous or not is based on one's *gunas*, merits/ demerits, imprints and tendencies, and they are special reasons for one's action.

Like the sun that illuminates all actions, whether or not they are righteous without interfering, so does *Ishvara* illuminate all our actions completely uninvolved. When we surrender our actions to *Ishvara*, we surrender all the other four reasons then our individuality disappears.

Lord Krishna says that while these five are the reason for any action, some people think that the Soul performs the action. He says the reason for such assumptions is because their intellect is uncultivated. Those whose intellect is not purified by the Vedas do not see even when they see. They have a contrary vision of the truth. It is the same as seeing the snake in the rope. He says their intellect keeps them in *samsara*.

Lord Krishna says that the wise know that their ego is false, and they are neither the doer nor the experiencer. Having this knowledge, they are free from all disturbances of the mind. And they know they are witnesses to everything and live without guilt. When the mind is not affected by anything, one has achieved liberation.

Even those in extreme *tamas guna* will not be affected by anything or any kind of unrighteousness like those in extreme *sattva*. In this context, we are not talking about those in *tamas* whose intellect has gone completely blind. When the intellect is very low, one has no guilt, but that is not liberation. Learning the scriptures will make us feel guilty and other emotions more intensely. This shows our sensitivity and that our intellect has started to work. If deviating from righteousness makes one guilty, it shows one's mental growth. But we must soon cross over that also, and that is liberation.

Lord Krishna says those who have removed their ego through knowledge can do any action and will not be bound by them. He says even if the wise destroy the entire world, they will not be bound by their actions, nor will they feel any guilt. Although, the

wise with self-control will not derive pleasure from harming others. It is only those without control that will trouble others.

## Verses 13 – 17

Lord Krishna said,

*Now, learn from Me the five reasons for all actions, as declared in the [Sankhya](#) doctrine. The body, the doer (ego), the senses, the organs of action, and the presiding Deity are the five causes of action. 18.13- 18.14*

*Whatever action one performs by his body, speech or mind, whether proper or improper, these five are its causes. Such being the case, those with impure intellect look upon the Soul as the doer. They do not see. 18.15- 18.16*

*Those who have given up the doer ship and whose intellect is unattached, even if they slay the entire world, they do not kill, nor are they bound by actions. 18.17*





## Part III

# The Three Kinds

Lord Krishna discusses six principles by splitting them into three *gunas*. He takes knowledge first and outlines how it leads to actions.

Actions can be classified as knowledge-oriented actions and action-oriented actions. Knowledge-oriented actions are actions performed to attain knowledge about something. Any activity performed to procure knowledge is knowledge-oriented action. All other actions performed for any other reasons are classified as action-oriented actions.

In general, we get involved in an action to gain something only after acquiring knowledge about it. However, the knowledge itself will not produce any result. For instance, knowledge of *yoga* will not yield the result of *yoga*. To get results, we must act on the knowledge we have gained. If one's action is flawed, it indicates that the knowledge has been flawed. Knowledge is vital for any action to succeed, and the right knowledge leads to the right actions. Knowledge is the reason for the action and its quality. But it is only through action we can create any change. However, the knowledge of the Self is an exception. It comes as a result of a pure mind. Here, attaining knowledge is the end, and there is nothing one has to do after that. The knowledge itself yields fruits. In all other places, knowledge yields fruits through action, but for the one with a pure mind understanding the Soul and attaining the Soul are the same. In the story of the ten boys crossing the river (chapter 2), knowing the tenth boy and attaining him are the same. Therefore, knowledge can be split into two, one being the root cause of actions and the other that yields fruits.

The activities that we involve in to attain the knowledge of the Self are called knowledge-oriented actions. The three principles that are required to attain the knowledge of the Self are:

1. The Knowledge — Instrument of knowledge.
2. The Known
3. The knower

To attain knowledge, all these three must align. If there is a flaw in any of these three, our knowledge will be faulty. Similarly, the three main components of action are:

1. The doer
2. The object of the action
3. The instrument of action (the action organs and the sense organs)

The quality of actions depends on these three. To act, one must have attained knowledge and through knowledge, desire. One cannot desire something he does not know about, and without desire, there is no reason for action.

## Verses 18 – 19

Lord Krishna said,

*Knowledge, the known and the knower are the threefold factors that induce action; the instrument of action, the act, and the doer are the three basis of*

**action.** 18.18

*Knowledge, action, and the doer are declared to be of three kinds differentiated by their **gunas** in the **Sankhya** philosophy. Now hear about them.* 18.19

### Three kinds of knowledge

Having detailed the relationship between knowledge and action, Lord Krishna splits knowledge, action and the doer into **sattvic**, **rajasic** and **tamasic**:

#### What is **jnana**?

**Jnana** is cognition. In general, correct cognition is considered as **jnana**. When we see the rope as a rope, then it is the correct cognition. And when we see it as a snake, it is not. When we perceive an object, we get a thought in our mind. If the thought is correct, it is called **jnana**. When it is not correct, it is not **jnana**, but it is contrary knowledge (**viparita jnana**). An object can be one thing, and our knowledge about it can be another thing. If we use the term "knowledge" only for correct cognition, then we cannot explain the terms **rajasic** and **tamasic** knowledge. Therefore, we can say that through the instrument of knowledge, if we get the right knowledge in our mind, it is **sattvic** knowledge, and if we attain contrary knowledge, it is **rajasic** or **tamasic** knowledge. Knowledge can be divided into two:

1. Knowledge of the Self
2. Knowledge of everything else.

Lord Krishna talks about the knowledge of the Self and segregates them into **sattvic**, **rajasic** and **tamasic** Knowledge.

#### What is **sattvic** knowledge?

Lord Krishna says the Soul is one, indestructible, illuminating principle and those who understand the Soul as one undivided underlying principle illuminating all beings see it correctly. The Soul is indestructible and cannot be limited by time, space, form, or other characteristics. One who understands the Soul this way has the **sattvic** knowledge about the Self.

It is apparent that there are differences outwardly, and that is the reason for the transactions. But deep in mind, there is the cognition that the substratum of everything is one and that all are fundamentally the same even though they vary in forms. This indicates one's mental maturity and comprehension of the truth and is considered **sattvic** knowledge.

#### What is **rajasic** knowledge?

See the difference among all the beings as the truth is **rajasic** knowledge. Some assume that everybody is fundamentally different from one another and that everybody has a different Soul. Pots differ from one another in their forms, but they are fundamentally clay. When one's intellect has not developed enough to see the underlying principle that illuminates everything beyond the superficial external differences, then his knowledge is **rajasic**.

Dualistic perception (**dvaita**) cannot be called wrong. Dualistic perception is a step, and one must expand one's consciousness and remove the dualism, moving to a higher level. If one is stuck only in the difference, it is **rajasic**.

In short, those stuck in the form without knowing the basis of all are stuck in **rajasic** knowledge. They only see the cause (**kariya**) without seeing the reason (**karana**). **Rajasic** knowledge is knowing the cause, and **sattvic** knowledge is comprehending the reason. Only when one's mind has attained purity can one move to **sattvic** knowledge. Dualism is **rajasic**, and non-dualism is **sattvic**.

#### What is **tamasic** knowledge?

Those who think their body is the truth have *tamasic* knowledge. Those with *tamasic* knowledge think there is nothing beyond the body and that when the body dies, there is nothing more to one. They think they have gotten the body by chance and must indulge in it as long it is available. They do not understand the concept of sins and virtues. Their philosophies are based on their vanity in their body and are very pleasant and convincing, but there is no truth to them. They are too attached to their bodies and therefore have unshakable faith that the body is all there is. But their philosophy has no logic as the body which attains six-fold changes cannot be the truth.

Some people see the snake as the truth. Similarly, the *tamasic* sees the body as the truth. Like the underlying rope, which is invisible when one sees the snake, so is the Soul (*Atma*) unknown to the deluded. The result of *tamasic* knowledge yields very low fruits. These people make efforts only to attain what is comfortable and joyous for the body.

Like animals who can only derive pleasure from lower actions and cannot appreciate anything beyond eating, sleeping, and procreating, those for whom the body is the truth cannot achieve any pleasure even at a mental level. They cannot experience joy from thinking or from knowledge.

## Verses 20 – 22

Lord Krishna said,

*Know that the knowledge because of which one sees the one indestructible undivided reality in the divided is *sattvic*.* 18.20

*The knowledge because of which one sees the diversity in all beings and plurality in their essence is *rajasic*.* 18.21

*The knowledge which is confined to effect, without any knowledge about the reason, irrational and without any knowledge of the reality is declared *tamasic*.* 18.22

### Three kinds of actions

#### What is *sattvic karma*?

In short, *karma yoga* is *sattvic karma*. The qualities of *sattvic karma* are:

1. Performing one's duty.
2. Delivering it without the sense of doership. Doing it as an instrument of God.
3. Performing the duty without attraction and aversion. The attraction and aversion in mind should not become a hindrance while delivering one's duty.
4. Performing actions without any expectations for the reward and accepting the fruits of one's duty as God's grace (*prasada buddhi*).

Duties/ actions performed with such an attitude — with the attitude of a *karma yogi* is *sattvic karma*. Also, actions like eating, resting, working, and sleeping performed in moderation are considered *sattvic*. In short, a balanced *karma yogi's* life is *sattvic*.

#### What are *rajasic* actions?

Actions performed because of the instigation of desire are *rajasic* actions. *Kamya karma* (actions performed to fulfil one's desire) is *rajasic karma*, though not all *kamya karma* can be classified as *rajasic*. Actions driven by desire become *rajasic* based on the attitude one has toward the actions. If the actions instigated by desires are within the limits of righteousness and if they are in moderation, they cannot be called as *rajasic*. But when they become excessive and exceed moderation or if achieved unrighteously, they become *rajasic*.

Performing duties with a sense of pride in order to enjoy its fruits is *rajasic*. If one is involved in work for indulgence and pleasure, it is considered *rajasic*. Such actions will harm oneself by depleting one's health and other areas of well-being. Being in action always because of desire is *rajasic*. In general, overaction is considered *rajasic* even if they are righteous. One must balance meditation, resting, and actions. It is considered *rajasic* to perform another's duty by disregarding one's own.

#### **What are *tamasic* actions?**

All actions that arise out of delusion are *tamasic*. Actions that arise from wrong judgement or by mixing the goals with the means to goals are *tamasic* actions, and most of the time, they are performed even without one's knowledge.

Actions undertaken without thinking about the consequences, calculating the loss, that harm oneself or others, beyond one's capabilities (physical, mental or intellectual) or qualification are *tamasic* actions. For instance, actions that cause loss or more difficulty or inactions which lead to loss are *tamasic*. Here, the loss can be loss of health, wealth, life longevity or merits.

## **Verses 23 – 25**

Lord Krishna said,

*The actions performed as duty, without attraction or aversion, unattached and devoid of desire for its fruits, are *sattvic* actions.* 18.23

*Actions that are performed to fulfil one's desires or fruitive results, that which are done with egoism or with great endeavour, are *rajasic* actions.* 18.24

*Those actions undertaken out of delusion, without considering the consequence, loss, injury and disregarding one's own ability are *tamasic* actions.* 18.25

#### **Three kinds of doer**

*Karta* means a doer. A *karta* is an independent person who has the willpower and choice to do an action. Before performing any action, he has a choice to do or not to do and even how to do. But once he acts, there is no choice for him. He does not have any choice/ control over the fruits of his actions. As a *karta* (doer), one has a choice, and as a *bhokta* (experiencer), one does not.

Lord Krishna details the three types of doers (*karta*) — the *sattvic*, *rajasic* and the *tamasic*. In short, one who is involved in *sattvic karma* is a *sattvic karta*, and in *rajasic karma* is a *rajasic karta*, and in *tamasic karma* is *tamasic karta*. If *karma yoga* is *sattvic karma*, *karma yogi* is a *sattvic karta*. Lord Krishna details the characteristics of a *karma yogi* as a *sattvic* doer:

1. One who has renounced attachments from his actions and the fruits of his action is a *karma yogi*. He performs his duty without attachment or aversion.
2. A *karma yogi* does not take pride in his possessions, wealth, or qualities. He looks at himself as an instrument of God in all the good he does, like sacrifices and performing charity.
3. He is firm in all the endeavours he takes up. He finishes his work even when there are hindrances.
4. He performs work with full involvement and joy.
5. He is steady in both success and failure. Delivering his duty is success for a *karma yogi*, after which there is nothing to be done and no result to be expected.

#### **The *rajasic* doer**

1. *Rajasic* doers are those who perform actions out of the desire for objects, with the attitude of indulgence to experience pleasure.
2. They desire the fruits of all their actions. They do not perform actions to purify themselves but to satisfy their desires.
3. They perform their duty also like *kamya karma* (with a desire for the outcome).
4. They are taken over by greed and do not share anything they attain with others. They are attached to their objects and may even desire others' objects.
5. Their actions and speech may hurt others.
6. They are unclean both internally and externally — both in mind and surroundings.
7. They are elated in victory and are dejected by loss.

#### The *tamasic* doer

1. The *tamasic* doer are those whose thoughts, speech and actions do not align. They lack integrity.
2. They are untrustworthy.
3. They lack comprehension, and their actions and speech arise from instincts and not from correct knowledge. They allow all the thoughts that come to them.
4. They are fixed and firm in their wrong goals.
5. They do not show respect to the elders with knowledge, the scriptures or the *guru*.
6. They are taken over by indolence and do not act when required.
7. They do not act even if they have the power to do so out of selfishness.
8. They betray others and spoil others' lives deliberately.
9. Their minds are usually engulfed in sorrow without any joy.
10. They are insatiable even if they have everything.
11. Their actions are very slow, consuming a lot of time to perform even small tasks.

The *rajasic* and *tamasic* doers accumulate demerits while the *sattvic* get merits and attain purity of mind. Based on the type of doer we are, we attain fruits for our actions. And our life unfolds based on the fruits of our actions.

## Verses 26 – 28

Lord Krishna said,

*He who is free from attachment, and egoism, endowed with determination and enthusiasm and equipoised in success and failure is called *sattvic*.* 18.26

*He who desires the fruits of action, passionate, covetous, cruel, greedy, impure, and easily elated or dejected, is *rajasic*.* 18.27

*He who is unsteady, vulgar, stubborn, deceitful, lazy, despondent and procrastinating is *tamasic*.* 18.28

#### Three kinds of intellect

##### *Sattvic* intellect

When one's comprehension of everything is correct, it is said to be a *sattvic* mind. When one sees the rope and understands it as the rope, then that intellect is *sattvic*. *Sattvic* intellect, in general, is understanding right and wrong as they are. The *sattvic* intellect knows its responsibilities on the path of action or on the path of renunciation. Knowing what one must do and what one must not, what one must fear and what one must not is *sattvic* intellect. Fear of unrighteousness, bad association, accumulating demerits, money, and fame are the right kinds of fear as it protects one. One must not



fear speaking the truth or God. The intellect that understands bondage and liberation, that which knows the difference between good and pleasant, is *sattvic*. In general, *sattvic* intellect is that which knows how to lead life, attain knowledge and choose a suitable path.

#### **How to attain *Sattvic* intellect?**

One attains *sattvic* intellect by being *sattvic* in everything, by performing *sattvic yajna*, *karma yoga*, and serving others. Our lifestyle builds our intellect.

#### ***Rajasic* intellect**

The intellect which is doubtful because of unsteady knowledge is a *rajasic* intellect. The intellect that is doubtful about righteousness and unrighteousness, actions one must do and must not, right and wrong, is a *rajasic* intellect.

#### ***Tamasic* intellect**

Being steady in wrong knowledge is *tamasic* intellect. Those with *tamasic* intellect are very certain in the wrong and contrary knowledge without a doubt. When one sees a rope as a snake and is certain about it, it is *tamasic* intellect. These people think unrighteousness is right. Their intellect is covered by delusion, and it lacks discrimination.

## Verses 29 – 32

Lord Krishna said,

*Hear from Me the distinctions of intellect and determination, as I clearly define them to you based on the three modes of material nature. 18.29*

*The intellect is said to be *sattvic* when it knows the path of work and renunciation, understands what ought to be done and what not to be done, what is duty and non-duty, what is to be feared and what is not to be feared, what is bondage and what is liberation. 18.30*

*The intellect is *rajasic* when it is confused between righteousness and unrighteousness and cannot distinguish between right and wrong. 18.31*

*That intellect, which is enveloped in darkness in regards to righteousness and unrighteousness, perceiving everything contrary to what they are, is said to be *tamasic*. 18.32*

#### **Three kinds of determination**

When we pursue any goal, we are certain to encounter hindrances on the path. In circumstances where we meet with hindrances, the power to pursue the goal without giving up is determination. It is the quality of being resolute. One's determination or firmness is because of the combination of mental and physical strength.

#### **What is *sattvic* determination?**

When one is involved in *sattvic* practices, austerity, or righteousness, the determination he has while pursuing them is considered *sattvic*.

#### **What does *sattvic* determination do?**

The *sattvic* determination directs one's mind, body, instruments and life force to act so one continues on the chosen path to the goal. It removes indolence and gives one the power to tolerate hindrances. One must be persistent and regular in *sattvic* practices.

#### **How can one build *sattvic* determination?**

1. *Mumukshutva*: If one has an intense desire for what he wants, he will be firm in attaining it.
2. Patience: By building patience, we can build determination.



### What is *rajasic* determination?

One firm in *rajasic* practices (austerities and worship) is said to have *rajasic* determination. The determination that arises from selfishness, desire or indulgence is *rajasic* in nature. One's firmness in *dharma*, *artha* and *kama* is *rajasic* determination. Here *dharma* means to accumulate merits to enjoy. The merits that lead one to *artha* (wealth) and *kama* (all desires). One who leads a righteous life to accumulate merits to attain wealth and all his desires is *rajasic*. He is not righteous to attain mental purity but to indulge. One driven by the desire for the fruits of his actions, indulgent and does not compromise his comfort for others is firm in his selfish desires.

### What is *tamasic* determination?

The firmness one has on *tamasic* practices is *tamasic* determination. Not being able to discriminate and because of the wrong knowledge, if one is attached to the non-permanence, then it *tamasic* mind. Lord Krishna says one with a *tamasic* mind does not leave any of these:

1. Reverie: They are very firm in their imagination. They are always in a state of being lost in a reverie. It is also called *mano rajya*, meaning building a kingdom in mind. They cannot stop their mind from this continuous flow of unnecessary imagination. He uses the word *swapna* to describe being in a state of reverie. Some interpret this as sleeping a lot.
2. Fear: Some are in a constant state of fear without letting go of fear one after the other.
3. Sorrow: It is natural to feel sorrow when we experience loss or failure, but holding on to that sorrow forever is *tamasic* firmness.
4. Confusion: Being confused or in a constant state of mental turbulence is *tamasic* firmness.
5. Firmness in enjoying through means that are contrary to that mentioned in the scriptures is *tamasic* firmness. It includes accumulating wealth through unrighteousness like abduction or stealing.

**Why is one firm with wrong convictions?** When one's knowledge is wrong, one's judgments are wrong, and so is his firmness.

## Verses 33 – 35

Lord Krishna said,

*The unwavering determination by which the mind, the life force and the senses are sustained is *sattvic*.* 18.33

*The determination by which one holds on to duty, pleasures, and wealth out of attachment and desire for the fruits of action is *rajasic*.* 18.34

*The unintelligent resolve because of which one is not able to give up dreaming, fearing, grieving, despair, and conceit is said to be *tamasic* determination.* 18.35

### Three kinds of happiness

Happiness is experienced as a result of our actions (or spiritual practices). Lord Krishna divided the actions into three and detailed them. He will now divide the fruits of actions into three. Simply put, if we are involved in *sattvic* actions/ practices, the fruits they yield will be *sattvic* happiness so will the fruits of *rajasic* and *tamasic* actions be *rajasic* and *tamasic* happiness, respectively.

In general, we get pleasure from an object by being with it and experiencing it for a while. A lot of experiences may not be enjoyable to begin with. For instance,

*japa*, meditation and other spiritual practices are not enjoyable, to begin with, but as one gets involved in them regularly, they begin to give pleasure. On the contrary, some habits/ practices are pleasant, to begin with, but will not result in happiness eventually. Though some objects give direct pleasure, most give pleasure only through repeated practice. Even with people, we derive happiness in that association through repeated interactions. Similarly, desire is also built through constant contemplation of the objects. We do not desire any object instantly in most cases. And as we own the object, we get attached to it and experience joy from it.

Happiness varies in quality and quantity. For example, experiencing an object is more joy than seeing it. Similarly, sharing anything with others is more joy than not sharing. The quality and quantity of our happiness increase as we experience something over and over again. When we experience happiness, all our sorrows, irrespective of their magnitude, are removed from the mind temporarily.

### **Sattvic happiness**

Lord Krishna says *sattvic* happiness is like poison in the beginning and becomes nectar in the end. The practices that lead to *sattvic* happiness are hard to begin but lead to the highest joy in the end. All spiritual practices are like that. Building values are another example. It may seem as though we compromise pleasure to adhere to the values, but we only compromise short-lived insignificant pleasure to attain long-lasting happiness. Some other examples of *sattvic* happiness are forgiving, sacrificing, attaining knowledge, renouncing, and building patience. *Sattvic* happiness is attained through a lot of sacrifices and hard work, but they lead to goodness. Many people think that renouncing joy is penance, but penance itself is joy. We experience more joy in taking up austerities than not. When we leave behind *rajasic* and *tamasic* joy, we experience happiness which is of higher quality and quantity. However, one must be very sensitive to understand and attain *sattvic* joy. A dull intellect can only comprehend *rajasic* and *tamasic* happiness. *Sattvic* happiness comes from within (our own mind), unlike *rajas* and *tamasic* happiness that come from external objects. When the objects leave, the *rajasic* and *tamasic* happiness also leaves. *Rajasic* and *tamasic* happiness, therefore, end in sorrow always. The mind that can comprehend the Soul (*Atma*) is always happy in itself. It is *sattvic* happiness.

Both a spiritual aspirant and the wise experience the *sattvic* joy, except that the aspirant is attached to the *sattvic* joy while the wise are not attached to the *sattvic* joy also. This is an example of how all the *gunas* bind us, including *sattva*. The wise being dispassionate about *sattvic* joy also experience the joy of liberation.

### **Rajasic happiness**

Lord Krishna says that what is like nectar in the beginning and ends up becoming poison later is *rajasic* happiness. *Rajasic* happiness is the pleasure that arises from the union of the sense organs with their sense objects. Though such a union is extremely enjoyable, they are very short-lived and end up leaving one miserable. All indulgence weakens one's body and senses. The power of the sense organs which indulges deteriorates. With constant indulgence, one will lose his discrimination power. Indulgence depletes memory and intelligence one has accumulated over the years from one's own experience as well as from observing others. All that is attained through effort and hard work perish because of indulgence. Though they may bring momentary happiness, they will eventually make one's mind dull. One experiencing only *rajasic* happiness will eventually feel tired of his life, and such a life is a life of fear. *Rajasic* happiness will destroy and enslave one.

### **Tamasic happiness**

Lord Krishna says that what gives comfort in the beginning and brings delusion in the end, is *tamasic* happiness. The comfort experienced in sleeping, laziness and negligence is *tamasic* happiness. Even while experiencing that comfort, one is

unaware of it. At least, there is awareness while experiencing *rajasic* happiness, but there is none or very little in *tamasic*.

When oversleeping, one does not even know that he is happy. Some are comfortable with being unclean or not completing important work because of laziness. They derive pleasure from being lazy as there is no strain on the body. Some enjoy being negligent because they do not understand or cannot calculate the consequences of it. Joy from intoxication, negligence, and not holding responsibilities are some examples of *tamasic* happiness.

Lord Krishna says that everything that has ever manifested, be it in this world or any other, be it the higher beings like the devas or the lower beings inhabiting the hellish worlds, both lifelessness (*jada*) or conscious beings, are all made of the combination of the *gunas*. One must cross over all the *gunas* to realise the Self.

## Verses 36 – 40

Lord Krishna said,

*Now hear from Me the three kinds of happiness in which one rejoices by practice and by which one comes out of all distress. 18.36*

*That which seems like poison at first, but is like nectar, in the end, is said to be *sattvic* happiness. It is generated from a clear understanding of the Self. 18.37*

*That pleasure which arises from the contact of the sense-organs with their sense objects is *rajasic*. It is like nectar at first but is like poison in the end. 18.38*

*That pleasure that deludes the self in the beginning and at the end, that which arises from sleep, indolence and negligence, is declared as *tamasic*. 18.39*

*There is no being on earth or in any celestial abodes (the demigods) who is free from these three *gunas* born of *prakriti* (nature). 18.40*



## Part IV

# Nature and Duties

Having declared everything is made of *gunas*, Lord Krishna says *karma yoga* is the means to cross over *tamas guna* to *rajas guna*. He talks about duties one must take up based on one's *gunas*. Although most of us associate duties with lifestyle, duties also depend on one's nature.

He divides the entire humanity based on the *gunas* (nature). They are called *varnas*. He says that based on one's nature, one falls under one of the *varnas*, and based on that, one must perform his duties. When one chooses and performs one's duties based on one's nature, that becomes *karma yoga* for him.

Lord Krishna says the one with a predominant *sattva* followed by *rajas* and then by *tamas* is a *brahmin* by *guna*. One with the predominant *rajas* followed by *sattva* and then by *tamas* is *kshatriya* (kings and warriors) by *guna*. Those with predominant *rajas* followed by *tamas* and then by *sattva* are *vaishyas* (merchants), and those with predominant *tamas* followed by *rajas* and then *sattva* is a *shudra* (labourer).

Irrespective of what *varna* one is born into, one belongs to a *varna* based on one's nature. And based on his nature, when he takes up *karma* (work) and performs it as *karma yoga*, he attains the purity of the mind.

One's nature comes from one's mental imprints and tendencies. The mental imprints and the tendencies are the fruits of one's actions carried through many lifetimes. The kind of work one chooses or does depends on one's nature. One cannot hide his nature, and one's actions come forth from him based on his nature. Therefore, one must take up a duty suitable based on his nature. And any work one takes up based on his nature, and does it correctly adhering to righteousness, will purify him. Be it the work of a *brahmin* or a *shudra*, the results they yield when performed as *karma yoga* are the same. It purifies one's mind and qualifies him for *jnana yoga*.

Lord Krishna says a *brahmin* having predominant *sattva guna* takes up the below listed as his duties:

1. They learn the scriptures and teach them to others.
2. They adhere to a simple lifestyle of performing austerities and sacrifices.
3. They inspire and help others perform sacrifices.
4. They accept from others and share with others. They do not take more than what they want.
5. They keep their mind and senses under control.
6. They are clean both externally and internally.
7. They are straightforward.
8. They learn the scriptures and understand their meaning of them. In this context, we are talking about the (*karma kanda* section of the Vedas). They are both able to recite the scriptures and learn their meaning.
9. They believe in the scriptures, righteousness and the invisible fruits of actions.

Such actions come out of one's nature. No scriptures declare that one born to a *brahmin* will have these characteristics. The scriptures say that one with such attributes is to be understood as a *brahmin*. One's nature comes out of one's mental imprints and

tendencies. And a person with the above nature is a *brahmin*. Our actions come out based on our *gunas* even without our knowledge.

Lord Krishna discusses the actions that come out of one with the tendencies of a *kshatriya*:

1. They are daring. They do not fear anything.
2. They are both mentally and physically strong. They are ready to sacrifice their life for righteousness.
3. They are determined and do not run away from the battlefield.
4. They are firm and tolerate difficulties well.
5. They are alert and act immediately in difficult circumstances.
6. They follow righteousness and give charity. They generally have a lot of wealth, and they share it with others. As one gets more, he should not just accumulate but share it with others. Those with the characteristics of a *kshatriya* give abundantly.
7. They are born leaders.

*Rajas* being the predominant nature of the *vaishyas* (merchants), make them good at trading, farming and cattle rearing. And for those with predominant *tamas*, it is easier to work from their bodies than from the intellect. Serving others through work becomes the natural duty of those with the nature of a *shudra*.

The work one takes up based on one's tendencies will be both fulfilling and will serve as a duty for him. When performed well, one will both fulfil his tendencies and progress spiritually. We do not have the choice to change our nature, for even the wise follow their nature. And as long as one's nature is within the boundaries of righteousness, there is no need to change one's nature also. Even if one can work only through his body, that *karma* becomes *karma yoga* when he delivers it according to the guidelines of *karma yoga*.

One's duty (*svadharma*) is based on one's nature (*svabhava*), and in that, there is no choice. And when there is no choice, the actions will not yield their invisible fruits — the merits and demerits. One's capabilities restrict one's ability to work. Those comfortable with working physically cannot be forced to work intellectually, and similarly, those who work intellectually will also lack the capabilities to work through the body. Therefore, regardless of what one's duty is, the result they yield will be the same. Whether a *brahman* doing his duty or a *shudra*, there are differences in the visible fruits of their actions alone, but none in the invisible fruits they attain. When performed well, both attain the same level of mental purity. One who has more *sattva* has done much more austerities (either in this lifetime or the previous several lifetimes) to reach there, and so his visible fruits may be more. No matter what *varna* one belongs to, everyone attains the same mental purity when the duty is performed correctly. There is no reason to discriminate against work. It is more important how one does his work than what he does. Mental purity is attaining mental maturity. It means developing attributes like dispassion and other values. There is no need to attain the knowledge of the scripture to attain mental purity.

Lord Krishna promises to tell how one attains mental purity through action. He says when one worships *Ishvara* through one's work, he qualifies for knowledge. Lord Krishna defines *Ishvara*. He says *Ishvara* is the reason for the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the world — being both the material and the intellectual cause. *Ishvara* becomes the world from *maya* and goes back into *maya* after complete dissolution.

Lord Krishna says worshipping *Ishvara* through one's duty becomes *karma yoga*. Accepting the outcome of work motivated by desire as God's grace and doing everyday chores with the attitude of doing it to God is *karma yoga*. When one offers his work as worship, he attains mental purity and thereby qualifies for *jnana yoga*. He also says that it is better to do one's own duties, even with imperfections, than to do



others' duties perfectly. If needed, one can change the lifestyle he is in. If he cannot follow the rules of a student's lifestyle, he can become a householder and follow that. When he changes his lifestyle, his duties also change accordingly. For instance, if one is not able to perform all the austerities having taken up asceticism, it is ok, but one must not begin to trade or start a family life having undertaken asceticism.

Lord Krishna insists that we must be involved in duties even though they are flawed. Because without duties, one will lose the opportunity to purify one's mind. Duties are necessary for all those who need to purify their minds. To leave all the responsibilities, one must have a pure mind.

Most of the time, the choices we have will not be two distinct opposites — one choice being the best and the other the worst. Very often, we are in situations to choose between bad and worse. And all choices have their consequences, just like medicines have side effects. We take into account the side effects and yet take them for otherwise; it will lead to worse. Similarly, all actions have flaws, but they are better than inaction. Knowledge can only show. It cannot purify us. Just knowing one must not be greedy will not remove his greed. Only the right actions can purify one. One of the fruits of action is that it reforms our mental imprints (*samskara*). Therefore, one should not leave *karma* when one needs to purify oneself.

**How will one know if he has attained mental purity?** Mental purity can be measured on the scale of dispassion. When one has renounced everything out of discrimination and knowledge for certain, then he has attained mental purity.

Based on our mental maturity, we have created our own circumstances and taken up duties. Even if they are flawed, we must not sacrifice our duties.

One who has attained mental purity can leave his duties and take up *jnana yoga*. Leaving duties, in this case, is only choosing different duties. By cutting out all actions to pursue material goals, one takes up practices to attain spiritual goals by entering *jnana yoga*. The path of action is to purify oneself through actions. *Karma yoga*, charity, sacrifices, and worship are actions that one must perform to purify the self. On the path of renunciation, one must take up actions like *sravana*, *manana* and *nididhyasana* to attain knowledge. On this path, one must leave all attachments to all material objects and keep his mind calm. When one becomes ready through the path of action, one must enter the path of knowledge.

## Verses 41 – 48

Lord Krishna said,

*The duties of the **brahmins**, **kshatriyas**, **vaishyas**, and **shudras**—are distinguished in accordance with the qualities born of their own nature.* 18.41

*The actions of **brahmins** born of their own nature are tranquillity, self-restraint, austerity, purity, tolerance, integrity, knowledge of the scriptures, wisdom, and firm faith.* 18.42

*The actions of **kshatriyas** born of their own nature are valour, strength, firmness, dexterity, not retreating from battle, charity, and leadership.* 18.43

*Agriculture, cattle rearing and trading are the duties of the **vaishya** born of their own nature. Serving others through work is the natural duty of the **shudras** born of their own nature.* 18.44

*One attains perfection by fulfilling one's duties, born of one's own nature. Now hear from Me how one attains perfection while being engaged in his*



***duties.*** 18.45

***From Him whom all the beings evolve and by whom they are pervaded, by worshipping Him through performing one's duties, one attains perfection.***  
18.46

***It is better to do one's duty even imperfectly than to do another's perfectly. By doing one's duty ordained by one's own nature, one does not incur sin.***  
18.47

***One should not abandon one's duty born of one's nature, even if they are flawed, for all endeavours are covered by flaws, like the fire covered by smoke.*** 18.48



## Part V

# Jnana Yoga

### What is *jnana yoga*?

Lord Krishna says those who have understood that everything is temporary and, because of this knowledge, do not value anything and do not have any attachment to any pleasure objects, attain liberation through asceticism (*sannyasa*).

One may know the transient nature of everything, and yet his mind may linger on the pleasure objects. But those who have won over their mind are neither attached to the objects they have nor to those they do not. There is no delusion in the *manomaya kosha* and *vijnanamaya kosha* for the renunciants. They may use objects, but their intellect does not value them. Only with such non-attachment and determination should one take up asceticism. An ascetic lifestyle is taken up to perform *jnana yoga* and attain liberation through listening to the *guru*, contemplating and meditating. Through that knowledge, one understands that the Soul does not act, and the non-soul always acts. And by knowing that the self is the Soul which does not act, one will not experience any fruits for his actions. *Atma* is *nishkarma*, and *Atma jnani* is *nishkarmi*. When one attains this knowledge, there is nothing more to attain. And this kind of liberation is attained only through knowledge.

One who has attained mental purity and the qualification for *jnana yoga* attains *Brahman* as a result of his knowledge.

To perform *nididhyasana*, one should have removed the diseases of both the mind and intellect, which are ignorance and delusion. One should have eliminated ignorance and doubt by listening to the *guru* and contemplating the discourse. There should not be any ignorance in *vijnanamaya kosha*.

Lord Krishna details the practices conducive to *nididhyasana* one must undertake:

1. With *sattvic* determination, control, and streamlining of the mind and the senses, one must perform meditation.
2. One must use objects only for survival without attachment, aversion and non-indulgence. When one renounces, he must do it from within and not constantly think about them after giving them up.
3. One must try to be in solitude as much as possible. When one is among people, there is a constant feed of information, and he will be caught up in transactional matters.
4. One must consume less food as it helps one from falling asleep and feeling hungry.
5. One must be in control of one's mind, body and speech and must not become enslaved by luxuries.
6. One must uphold the highest goal at all times.

Lord Krishna lists the qualities one must leave to perform *jnana yoga*:

1. One must give up ego and weaken negative attributes like desire and anger.
2. One must reduce one's pride because of one's wealth, possession, and austerities. It is likely that such qualities are deep within one and may surface because of meditation. One must be careful and remove them as they come up.

3. When one develops 'mineness' on an object, he builds the desire to protect it. In the *sannyasa ashram*, one does not own anything. One can, however, use objects without the 'mineness' in them.

Lord Krishna says that if one leaves behind all these attributes and performs *sravana*, *manana*, and *nididhyasana*, he attains the nature of *Brahman* — Liberation.

Lord Krishna says one who knows *Brahman* will attain tranquillity and contentment. He will neither feel sorrow or elation nor will he have any desire or expectation. His body may go through joy and sorrow, but he will not have any mental resistance to any of his circumstances. He will not experience the sorrow of *samsara*. He treats all being alike in his mind. He says a *jivan mukta* (one liberated when alive) attains the most superior devotion — undivided devotion.

## Verses 49 – 53

Lord Krishna said,

*One who is detached from everything because of his intellect masters his mind and is free of all desires attains the highest perfection of freedom from action through renunciation. 18.49*

*Learn from Me briefly how one who has attained perfection also attains *Brahman* by being firmly fixed in knowledge. 18.50*

*One endowed with a pure intellect, firmly restraining the senses, abandoning sound and other objects of sense and casting away aversion and attraction, dwelling in solitude, eating in moderation, subjugating the mind, speech, and body, always engaged in meditation, perfecting dispassion, free from egoism, violence, arrogance, desire, anger, covetousness, situated in tranquillity, is fit for union with *Brahman*. 18.51-18.53*



## Part VI

# *Bhakti Yoga*

Lord Krishna says one who knows His real nature as both *Brahman* (without *maya*) and as *Ishvara* (with *maya*) through devotion is His greatest devotee. Such devotion happens only when the goal and the object of devotion are one and the same.

Although, in the beginning, one may show devotion as a means to achieve one's goal, his devotion progresses and comes to completion when the devotee, the means to the goal and the goal become the same. Through such devotion, the devotee sees everything as one.

Devotion (affection) is not an action. It is an attitude. Devotion in action is worship. One shows devotion through various ways, like recitation and worship. A *karma yogi* is a devotee who expresses his devotion through work, and so is a *jnana yogi* who shows devotion by listening and meditating on the teachings of *Ishvara*.

### **Devotion as action**

Lord Krishna describes how one expresses one's devotion through actions. He says a devotee follows the code of righteousness and offers all his work to Him. This is the first stage of devotion, and one who does this is a *karma yogi*.

### **Devotion as an attitude**

Lord Krishna says those who strive to achieve their goal through actions attain perfection through His grace. He says without knowledge, there is no liberation, and without understanding the scriptures, there is no knowledge. All knowledge comes from the instruments of knowledge, and without mental purity, no instrument can give knowledge. And without performing *karma yoga*, one does not attain mental purity. Lord Krishna says that even though there are several steps to liberation, one must uphold devotion up until the end. It is through devotion that one attains His grace. In the end, however, there is no reason for devotion as there will be no difference between the self and *Ishvara*. Lord Krishna describes how one must show devotion in steps:

The first step is to offer all the actions that come through mind, speech, and body to God intellectually. Any action we perform, must be performed with the attitude of offering it to God. We must offer with the correct understanding that everything comes from God and that He gives it to us. All types of devotion come from knowledge. Because of knowledge, we are able to understand *Ishvara*, and because of that, we are able to offer everything to Him and accept the fruits as His grace.

The second step is to set one's goal right, which is to attain Him. He says one must take up *buddhi yoga* to attain it. In this context, *buddhi yoga* means *karma yoga*. *Buddhi* means intellect, and as the intellect decides whether an action is *karma* or *karma yoga*, *karma yoga* is referred to as *buddhi yoga*. The action is the same, but the attitude that is facilitated by the intellect decides whether an action is *karma yoga* or just *karma*. Also, it is again the intellect that decides if an action is done with desire (*kama karma*) or without desire (*nishkama karma*).

Lord Krishna says one must keep Him in the mind always. One's goal remains in mind always, and even without one's knowledge, all one's actions align with the goal, which is deeply ingrained in his mind. One must practice keeping *Ishvara* in his

mind. He says as a result of devotion, one will cross over all hindrances in one's path through His grace. Ignorance is the biggest hindrance for anybody, which results in attachment and desire for objects and actions. Most people pray to remove the hindrance from their path when they pursue the object of their desire. But the one with the right goal knows that desires are the hindrance.

The ego gives one the strength to pursue anything. But anything attained from ego leads to pride. Also, the strength derived from the ego perishes. Another type of strength is attained through surrender. Anything attained through surrender does not lead to pride. Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that if he does not listen to His advice out of ego, Arjuna will fall from his goal. He says if Arjuna thinks he should not fight (perform his duty), it is because of delusion and is not the truth, and it will be a wrong decision. He says that Arjuna will change his decision by himself because his own nature will make him do so. Before we renounce anything, we must see if we have the power to renounce that. If we renounce beyond what we are capable of, that will harm us and others, and the sacrifice will not last.

Lord Krishna says all individuals are fettered by their own nature. They cannot go away from their own nature. If one's nature is within the boundaries of righteousness, then one must follow his nature and must not try to change it. By going through our nature, we must perfect ourselves. We must honour our nature and do what we have the capacity to do. We must only take up work, and spiritual practices based on our capacity and not follow others blindly. At times out of delusion, one may take up actions that do not align with his nature. Such efforts usually end up in distress, and one will change his actions on his own. If we do not understand our nature and leave our duties, our own nature will forcefully push us back to work. Without perfecting our minds, if we leave something, we will go back to it. All beings are bound by their nature. They are bound by the actions that arise out of their nature.

One can change one's nature slowly. Though one may intellectually know what is right to do, one's nature takes over and pushes one to act according to it. One's nature is defined by one's tendencies and imprints accumulated from many lifetimes and is shaped by one's merit. If one's nature is righteous, one must allow it. But if it is not, then one must try to change it with effort and awareness.

Lord Krishna says the Supreme Being dwells within the heart of all beings as consciousness. From there, He directs everyone through his *maya* like an instrument. Being that consciousness from within, He bestows everyone with the fruits of their actions. Actions are *jada* (lifeless). They, by themselves, do not bring any fruits for the doer. There must be an intelligence which can bestow the fruits. Lord Krishna says He is that intelligence in all beings which brings them the fruits of their action. It means as a *bhokta* (experiencer), our circumstances are bestowed upon us by the witness within us. And until the ego is destroyed, the doer is different from *Ishvara*.

Lord Krishna says we must fully surrender to that consciousness that is inside of all of us. Surrendering is accepting everything we experience as a *bhokta* (experiencer). It is disrespectful to that witness to resist the fruits given to us based on our actions. Surrender (*saranagati*) is the total acceptance of all our experiences. When one surrenders he will not find any shortcomings in his circumstances. He will accept both joy and sorrow alike. One does not have to accept difficulties as pleasure. He can accept them as difficulties but must accept them fully. We can accept joy as joy and loss as a loss. Total surrender is when there is no rejection in mind. As a *bhokta* (experiencer), we must accept all experiences without rejecting them. That is accepting *Ishvara*. Lord Krishna says through surrender. One will attain the highest peace by His grace.

When one accepts everything, he becomes mentally resilient. When we accept difficulties, the difficulties remain at the level of the body alone. For instance, the pain

of hunger will be felt by the body alone if we accept it. Even though the mind knows that the body is suffering, it will not get turbulent. When we choose to take up the penance of fasting, we accept hunger. At this time, even when the body struggles, the mind is calm. When the mind is calm, even if the body is in difficulty, we can perform spiritual practices. But if the mind struggles along with the body, one cannot take up any spiritual practices. Without mental resilience, one cannot pursue spiritual practices. But when one accepts the difficulties, the difficulties themselves become austerities.

*Karma kanda* of the Vedas help change the external circumstances, while *jnana kanda* changes the internal circumstances. *Jnana yoga* can be performed only with a calm mind. Lord Krishna says that if one performs *jnana yoga*, He will bestow complete peace upon the *yogi*, which is the fruit of the *yoga*. He assures that if one takes up *jnana yoga*, He will remove all the hindrances from one's path and ensure he attains the knowledge as a result. He says He will keep the *yogi* as a *jivan mukta* (liberated when alive). Surrender leads to a calm mind with which when a person performs *jnana yoga*, he attains eternal peace. A *jivan mukti* lives until his *prarabdha karma* gets over, and after that, his body (gross and subtle) mixes up in the elements and becomes *Brahmaswaroopa*. When he leaves his body, he becomes a *videha mukti* and attains an eternal state.

## Verses 54 – 62

Lord Krishna said,

*Having become one with Brahman, being serene within, he neither laments nor desires. Being equipoised to all beings, he attains supreme devotion to Me. 18.54*

*Only through devotion one knows Me — My true essence. Then having known Me, what and who I am, My devotee enters into full consciousness of Me. 18.55*

*By performing all actions and taking refuge in Me, one attains the eternal and indestructible abode through My grace. 18.56*

*Renounce all actions in Me through the intellect, have Me as the highest goal, resort to the yoga of the intellect, and always keep your consciousness fixed on Me. 18.57*

*If you always fix your mind on Me, by My grace, you shall overcome all obstacles and difficulties. But if, out of ego, you do not listen to My advice, you will be lost. 18.58*

*Motivated by ego, if you resolve not to fight, your decision will be in vain. Your own nature will compel you to fight. 18.59*

*Those actions which out of delusion you do not wish to do, you will be compelled to do them by your own inclination, born of your own nature. 18.60*

*Dwelling within the hearts of all beings, the Supreme Lord orchestrates them according to their karmas by His illusive power as though an instrument. 18.61*

*Surrender unto Him with your whole heart. By His grace, you will attain transcendental peace and the eternal abode. 18.62*



Lord Krishna says that He has given Arjuna the greatest of all secrets. It is the secret of all secrets because even when revealed, only the perfected understands. Knowledge is not easy to attain, and one will appreciate its greatness only after attaining it by comparing the change within himself. Lord Krishna asks Arjuna to contemplate and evaluate what He has said and choose for himself what he must do. Up until now, Lord Krishna was asking Arjuna to do his duties and not to leave the battlefield. But now, He has given Arjuna the full freedom to do what he pleases to do. This not just shows that Lord Krishna is confident that Arjuna has understood but also His faith in His teachings.

## Verse 63

Lord Krishna said,

*I have given you the secret of all secrets. Contemplate it and do as you wish.*

18.63

Lord Krishna says He will tell Arjuna the essence of the essence, for he is very dear to Him. Arjuna being a good student and having surrendered to Lord Krishna, wins his affection. Gita is not a book of the law (*vidhi shastra*). Gita is a book of knowledge. It gives one knowledge and freedom after that to choose whether or not one wants to follow it. It talks about the complete freedom one can attain without restricting one's freedom. This is the final discourse with which the Gita comes to completion. The Vedas give two types of knowledge

1. Knowledge about righteousness (Dharmashastras)
2. Knowledge about the Absolute Truth.

Basically, the scriptures teach what is right and what the truth is.

### **Why should one know what is right and wrong?**

By nature, everybody chases pleasure and chooses to avoid displeasure. The scriptures say that one's merits manifest as enjoyable circumstances while one's sins manifest as sorrow. To avoid sorrow, one must avoid committing sins.

The *karma kanda* of the Vedas gives us knowledge about what is right and wrong. It details actions that incur sin and those that accumulate merits. If comfort and joy is one's goal, *karma kanda* prescribes different kinds of actions, practices and meditation to achieve them. With the help of *karma kanda*, through actions and services, we attain what we naturally long for. And also, at times, we can compensate for our sins by performing compensatory actions. *Karma kanda* gives us knowledge about various *karma* (actions) and *dharma* (righteousness). This is the important use of *karma kanda* of the Vedas. It helps one accumulate merits, remove demerits, attain pleasure, and avoid sorrow.

If only one is happy with these short-lived pleasures through the prescribed actions in *karma kanda* then there is no need for him to do anything else. But the pleasure attained through these actions is in gradations; besides, they do not satiate one forever, no matter what he attains. Also, the pleasure lasts only until the fruits of the actions last, and again one has to perform actions to experience another bout of pleasure. So, there is sorrow mixed up in this joy, and that sorrow does not come naturally but as the consequence of the actions one performs. Through *karma kanda* one will not attain contentment, but at the same time, if one ignores *karma kanda* fully, he may start accumulating sins. Therefore, one must use *karma kanda* as a means to attain something lasting and complete. One must use it to qualify oneself for liberation. When one uses *karma kanda* to attain the qualification for liberation, it becomes *karma*

*yoga*. *Karma kanda* prescribes actions to accumulate merits, purify one's mind and attain values. It can be used for attaining pleasure or purity of mind. Gita details how *karma kanda* can be used for attaining purity of mind. It details how to perform actions to purify one's mind. The first section of the Gita is to use *karma kanda* to qualify oneself for liberation. Lord Krishna yet again briefs *karma yoga* in steps. He says:

1. One must do all actions for Him.
2. One must keep Him as the goal, i.e., to aim for *moksha* (liberation) and not *artha* (wealth), *kama* (desires) and *dharma* (actions, in this context).
3. One must perform the *yoga* of devotion and be attached to Him.
4. One must surrender unto Him. He asks his devotees to give up the ego (*ahamkara*) and accept Him fully with faith.

Lord Krishna began the second chapter by saying there is no sorrow, and it is out of one's delusion and attachment that one experiences sorrow. He said one is liberated from all sorrows through knowledge. He concludes this chapter by saying not to grieve.

Lord Krishna says after attaining mental purity, one must leave all actions and take up *jnana yoga*. He suggests one takes up asceticism after achieving mental purity. He says those with pure minds should move on to perform actions to acquire knowledge of the Absolute and must not be involved in other actions for material procurement. One must leave all actions after attaining the fruits of actions taken up for purifying oneself. Any action we take up to attain knowledge is *jnana yoga*. These actions that take our time, effort and health become instruments for knowledge (*jnana*) and not for actions (*karma*). Lord Krishna says having left work, one must surrender unto Him by sacrificing his ego. Sacrificing something that belongs to us is different from sacrificing ourselves. One must sacrifice oneself to attain the Supreme.

Lord Krishna says through *jnana yoga*, one understands Him as the One without any division. *Brahman* with *maya* manifests as a variety of power and beings. It manifests Itself as a variety of objects that appear to be many. But the true attributeless nature of *Brahman* is one without a division. He tells Arjuna to get rid of the ego through knowledge and surrender unto Him, the attributeless *Brahman*.

There are several types of surrender: A grieving devotee may sacrifice his ego by realising he will not be able to help himself. An aspirant student may surrender his ego to the instruments of knowledge with faith in his *guru* and the scriptures. But the wise sacrifice their "I" ness because of their knowledge that there is none other than the "One".

Those with mental purity must move on to the path of return (*nivritti marg*). One must take up actions like listening to the scriptures, contemplating the knowledge, being in silence and solitude, attaining knowledge and surrendering unto Him like the wise. Lord Krishna promises that He will liberate those who take up *jnana yoga* from all their sins. All sins in this context refer to:

1. Sins/demerits
2. Merits
3. Ignorance
4. Delusion

Both merits and demerits lead to bondage (*karma banda*). They both bind one in *samsara*. *Karma* gets over only by giving one the circumstance for pain or pleasure. Both merits and demerits keep one in the cycle of *samsara*, causing death and rebirth. For this reason, even merits are considered sins, except they keep one in higher *samsara*.

Ignorance is considered a sin because it is the reason for superimposition. One thinks he is the body because of the ignorance of *Brahman*. Delusion is the direct consequence of ignorance. Not knowing the difference between right and wrong and

the truth and false is a delusion. Delusion is contrary to knowledge, and ignorance about the Soul is a sin.

Lord Krishna says He will liberate a *jnana yogi* from all four sins and assures Arjuna that he will liberate him from sorrow. The four sins are the reason for sorrow, and sorrow is the outward manifestation of these sins. When the reason for sorrow is removed, one will be lifted from *samsara*. This is the conclusion of the Gita.

## Verses 64 – 66

Lord Krishna said,

*Hear again to My supreme words, the most confidential of all knowledge. I am revealing it to you for your own benefit as you are very dear to Me. 18.64*

*Fix your mind on Me, be devoted to Me, worship Me, offer obeisance to Me and certainly you will come to Me. This is my pledge to you, for you are dear to Me. 18.65*

*Abandon all *dharmas* (actions) and surrender unto Me alone. I will liberate you from all sins, do not grieve. 18.66*

This is the end of the Gita. Lord Krishna further explains some more details of the Gita.



## Part VII

# The End

### Who qualifies for *jnana yoga*?

Lord Krishna lists four conditions and says the Gita must be taught to only those who qualify for all these four conditions otherwise, it will not reap any fruits, and the efforts will go in vain. He says,

1. Not to teach Gita to those who do not perform the austerities. One must keep up with the five *yamas* and *niyamas* mentioned in the Yoga Shastras and follow righteousness. Otherwise, he will have no use for the knowledge.
2. Even if one leads a righteous life, one must not be taught if he has no devotion and faith in *Ishvara* or the *guru* or in the scriptures.
3. Some may be righteous and devoted but still must not be taught if they do not ask for it.
4. And finally, one who speaks ill of Lord Krishna must not be given the knowledge of the Gita.

## Verse 67

Lord Krishna said,

***Never disclose this science to those devoid of austerities or devotion. Do not speak to those who do not desire to listen or to those who speak ill of Me. 18.67***

Lord Krishna says that those who teach this *shastra* are His superior devotees. He glorifies the knowledge and the devotees who spread this knowledge to others. He glorifies the *guru shishya* lineage. He says those in that lineage have a great devotion towards Him, and as a result, they attain Him. Without the lineage, the correct meaning of these verses would not have reached the other devotees through the ages. He says among His devotees, there is no one dearer to Him than those in this lineage. Neither has there been in the past, nor will there be in the future.

## Verse 68

Lord Krishna said,

***Amongst My devotees, those who teach this Supreme Secret are My greatest devotees. They will certainly come to Me, without a doubt. 18.68***

Lord Krishna says listening to the Gita is the highest order of worship. There are several forms of worship, and the first step of worship is the gross form of worship, like the fire sacrifice, *japa*, and daily prayer. Recitation or worship performed through the form of speech is a step above, and worship performed mentally is even higher. Chanting is easier, but the fruits they yield are lower. Mumbling is a little harder, and their fruits are more. Mentally reciting is tougher, but they yield higher fruits. But

superior to all of them is *jnana yoga*. The fruit they yield is higher than all the other *yajnas* (sacrifices). *Jnana yajna* is defined as the highest order of devotion as it aims to attain the knowledge Lord Krishna likes to impart. Performing any other form of worship results in temporary joy and peace. But *jnana yoga* changes the knowledge within us. It changes the way we perceive the world and interact with it. It removes the root cause of our sorrow. The process is difficult, but the fruits are supreme. Lord Krishna says that those involved in the practices of the *yoga* of knowledge are superior devotees and that they are the ones who really follow him. Having declared *jnana yajna* as the highest order of worship, Lord Krishna talks about the fruits it yields yet again. All practices yield two types of fruits.

1. The primary fruits (*mukiya phala*)
2. The secondary fruits or the side effect (*avanatara phala*)

We know the primary goal and the fruit of *jnana yajna* is liberation. In this context, Lord Krishna talks about the side effect (*avantara phala*) of learning the scriptures, mainly to address the path of those taking up *jnana yoga* without mental purity. If one learns Gita without having attained the purity of the mind, i.e. without removing attachment and aversion, and if it does not give its primary fruit, which is knowledge and liberation, Lord Krishna says it gives one merit (*punya*). He says one attains as much merits as he would attain by performing all the practices prescribed in the *karma kanda* section of the Vedas.

Also, without mental purity, if one takes up learning the Gita, it gives one the purity of the mind. Only through listening will a person learn how to listen to the scriptures. Lord Krishna says by listening to the Gita, one removes all his sins and attains merits to go to the higher abodes. *Sravana* does not go to waste. We can further split the secondary fruits of *jnana yoga* into two:

1. As a result of *jnana yoga*, one attains purity of mind, which helps him attain knowledge. If knowledge has not been the outcome of the listening, these teachings will remain as imprints in one's mind (*samskaras*) and will purify the mind eventually. And when the mind becomes pure, one does not have to listen to them all over again. The knowledge will surface from one's own mental imprints (*samskaras*).
2. If one does not desire knowledge or liberation, the merits of listening to the Gita will result in pleasure.

There is no loss in learning the Gita. The primary fruit is liberation, and if one is unable to attain it, he will certainly attain the secondary fruits, which are the merits in both this world and the hereafter. But one will get the fruits only if he listens to them with full faith and without finding flaws in *Ishvara* and the *guru*.

## Verses 69 – 71

Lord Krishna said,

*There is none among men dearer to Me that he who promulgates the Gita, nor shall there be another on earth dearer to Me.* 18.69

*And he who studies this sacred dialogue of ours, by him I would be worshipped through the sacrifice of knowledge; such is My view.* 18.70

*Even those who only listen to this knowledge with faith and without malice will be liberated of all sins and will attain the higher abodes where the virtuous dwell.* 18.71

It is the duty of the *guru* to find out if the students have understood the teaching, and in the case where they have not, the *guru* shows more examples from the Upanishads and explains it to them until they understand. Lord Krishna has been a *guru* to Arjuna and so asks him if he has attained the fruits of His teaching. He asks Arjuna if he has listened to it with an undistracted mind, faith, practice, and with interest. He asks if his delusion and ignorance have been removed.

Arjuna says that because of Lord Krishna's grace, he has attained the knowledge, and as a result, his delusion has been removed. He says he is steadfast and doubtless in both the matters of Soul and non- soul and that he is ready to follow his instructions and perform his duties. Although, after becoming a *jnani* (wise), one does not have to perform any duties, Arjuna is ready to perform his duty for the sake of others' good without attachment and aversion to it.

## Verses 72 – 73

Lord Krishna said,

*O Arjun, have you heard Me with an attentive mind? Is your delusion caused by ignorance destroyed?* 18.72

Arjuna said

*Destroyed is my delusion because of the knowledge I have gained through your grace. I stand firm without any doubts. I shall act according to Your instructions.* 18.73

Sanjaya speaks about his experience of this profound knowledge, and with his statement, the Gita comes to completion.

## Verses 74 – 78

Sanjaya said,

*Thus have I heard this wonderful conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna, which causes my hair to stand on its end.* 18.74

*Through the grace of Vyasa, I heard this supreme and most secret *yoga* taught by the Lord of *Yoga*, Bhagavan Krishna Himself.* 18.75

Sanjaya thanks Vyasa because He gave him a special vision by which he narrates everything that happens on the battlefield to king Dhritarashtra.

*As I recall this astonishing and wonderful dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna, I rejoice again and again!* 18.76

*And when I remember the wonderful form of Lord Krishna (*Vishwaroopa*), I am astonished and thrilled with joy again and again.* 18.77

*Vishwaroopa* — Lord Krishna showed in Himself the entire manifestation — the creation, sustenance and destruction.

*Wherever there is Lord Krishna, The Lord of *Yoga* and wherever there is the Supreme Archer Arjuna, in my opinion, there will certainly be unending prosperity, victory, welfare and righteousness.* 18.78





**Aum Tat Sat**

# Summary

## Part I –Renunciation

- Arjuna wishes to know the nature of *sannyasa* (asceticism) and *tyaga* (sacrifice) and the differences between the two
- Lord Krishna first details others' opinions of renunciation (*tyaga*) and asceticism (*sannyasa*). He says some sages say that renouncing work that is induced by desire is asceticism, while others say renouncing all duties altogether is asceticism.
- Sacrifice is renouncing the fruits of action, while asceticism is declared as leaving some actions or all of them.
- Asceticism is at the action level, while sacrifice is at the attitude level.
- Lord Krishna says that He uses both asceticism and sacrifice interchangeably without distinctions. There are no differences between asceticism and sacrifice, except that one is a lifestyle and the other is not. But renunciation is common in both and so are their fruits.
- Renouncing everything and taking up asceticism is not for all. Not everybody has the mental maturity for it. So, in general, it is advised that one must not leave his duties and take up *sannyasa*.
- We must take up what suits us. In general, being among duties is good for everyone. Without duties, one will not have the internal inspiration and will slip into *tamas guna*. Therefore, one must not relinquish actions like sacrifices, charities, austerities or duties.
- *Tamasic sannyasa*: If one renounces out of ignorance or because of contrary knowledge, then one is taking up *tamasic* asceticism.
- *Rajasic sannyasa*: Those who take up asceticism to escape difficulties or out of fear of them take up *rajasic sannyasa*.
- Both *tamasic sannyasa* and *rajasic sannyasa* will not yield any results.
- Lord Krishna says the ultimate reward of sacrifice is liberation — the state of fearlessness, purity and peace.
- *Sattvic sannyasa*: The asceticism taken up instigated by discrimination and therefore having attained dispassion through right knowledge is *sattvic* asceticism.
- Fruits of *sattvic sannyasa* is attaining *sattvic* mind, from it attaining discrimination and dispassion and circumstances to attain the knowledge of Self.
- Lord Krishna says an ignorant should not renounce actions but only sacrifice the fruits from them.
- Lord Krishna says the ignorant will take one of these paths after death: the undesirable fruits (lower realms), desirable fruits (higher abodes), rebirth.
- Lord Krishna says a renunciant who stands steadfast in his knowledge does not go through any of these paths. A *sannyasi* is an *agathi*. They do not have a path after their death, and their death is the final death.

## Part II – Reasons for Actions

- Lord Krishna describes the Soul as *akarta* and *abhokta*, which means the Soul is a non-doer and non-experiencer.
- Lord Krishna states five reasons for any action, which are also stated in the Upanishads. They are the gross body, life force, the five sense and action organs, the doer, and God. God being the general reason and while others being the special reason.

- General reason is that which is common for all. Special reason is unique to a particular individual.

### Part III – The Three Kinds

- Lord Krishna discusses six principles by splitting them into three *gunas*
- Knowledge: The Soul is indestructible and cannot be limited by time, space, form, or characteristics. One who understands the Soul this way has the *sattvic* knowledge about the Self. Those who see the difference among all the beings as the truth are those with *rajasic* knowledge. Those who think their body is the truth have *tamasic* knowledge.
- Action: *Karma yoga* is *sattvic karma*. Actions performed because of the instigation of desire are *rajasic* actions. Performing duties with a sense of pride in order to enjoy its fruits is *rajasic*. Overaction and performing other's duty disregarding one's own is also *rajasic*. All actions that arise out of delusion are *tamasic*. Actions undertaken without thinking about the consequences, calculating the loss, that harm oneself or others, beyond one's capabilities (physical, mental or intellectual) or qualification are *tamasic* actions.
- Doer: A *karma yogi* as a *sattvic* doer. *Rajasic* doers are those who perform actions out of the desire for objects, with the attitude of indulgence to experience pleasure. *Tamasic* doers are those who lack comprehension, and their actions and speech arise from instincts and not from correct knowledge. They are fixed and firm in their wrong goals and lack integrity and straight forwardness.
- Intellect: When one's comprehension of everything is correct, it is said to be a *sattvic* mind. The intellect which is doubtful because of unsteady knowledge is a *rajasic* intellect. Being steady in wrong knowledge is *tamasic*.
- Determination: When one is involved in *sattvic* practices, austerity, or righteousness, the determination he has, to pursue them is considered *sattvic*. One firm in *rajasic* practices (austerities and worship) is said to have *rajasic* determination. The firmness one has on *tamasic* practices is *tamasic* determination.
- Happiness: Lord Krishna says *sattvic* happiness is like poison in the beginning and becomes nectar in the end. The practices that lead to *sattvic* happiness are hard to begin with, but lead to the highest joy in the end. All spiritual practices are like that. Lord Krishna says that what is like nectar in the beginning and ends up becoming poison later is *rajasic* happiness. *Rajasic* happiness is the pleasure that arises from the union of the sense organs with their sense objects. Though such union is extremely enjoyable, they are very short-lived and end up leaving one miserable. Lord Krishna says that what gives comfort in the beginning and brings delusion, in the end, is *tamasic* happiness. The comfort experienced in sleeping, laziness and negligence is *tamasic* happiness.

### Part IV – Nature and Duties

- Lord Krishna says *karma yoga* is the means to cross over *tamas guna* to *rajas guna*. He talks about duties one must take up based on one's *gunas*.
- He divides the entire humanity based on the *gunas* (nature). They are called *varnas*. He says that based on one's nature, one falls under one of the *varnas* and based on that, one must perform his duties.
- Lord Krishna says the one with a predominant *sattva* followed by *rajas* and then by *tamas* is a *brahmin* by *guna*. One with the predominant *rajas* followed by *sattva* and then by *tamas* is *kshatriya* (kings and warriors) by *guna*. Those with predominant *rajas* followed by *tamas* and then by *sattva* are *vaishyas* (merchants), and those with predominant *tamas* followed by *rajas* and then *sattva* is a *shudra* (labourer).

- Irrespective of what *varna* one is born into, one belongs to a *varna* based on one's nature. And based on his nature, when he takes up *karma* (work) and performs it as *karma yoga*, he attains the purity of the mind
- The actions of *brahmins* born of their own nature are tranquility, self-restraint, austerity, purity, tolerance, integrity, knowledge of the scriptures, wisdom, and firm faith.
- The actions of *kshatriyas* born of their own nature are valour, strength, firmness, dexterity, not retreating from battle, charity, and leadership.
- Agriculture, cattle rearing, and trading are the duties of the *vaishya* born of their own nature. Serving others through work is the natural duty of the *shudras* born of their own nature.
- It is better to do one's duty even imperfectly than to do another's perfectly. By doing one's duty ordained by one's own nature, one does not incur sin.

### Part V – *Jnana Yoga*

- Lord Krishna says those who have understood that everything is temporary and, because of this knowledge, do not value anything and do not have any attachment to any pleasure objects, attain liberation through asceticism (*sannyasa*).
- Lord Krishna says one who is detached to everything because of his intellect masters his mind and is free of all desires attains the highest perfection of freedom from action through renunciation.
- He says one endowed with a pure intellect, firmly restraining the senses, abandoning sound and other objects of sense and casting away aversion and attraction, dwelling in solitude, eating in moderation, subjugating the mind, speech, and body, always engaged in meditation, perfecting dispassion, free from egoism, violence, arrogance, desire, anger, covetousness, situated in tranquility, is fit for union with *Brahman*.

### Part VI – *Bhakti Yoga*

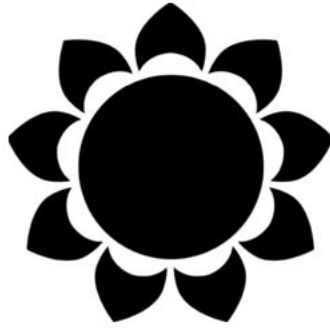
- Lord Krishna says one who knows His real nature as both *Brahman* (without *maya*) and as *Ishvara* (with *maya*) through devotion is His greatest devotee. Such devotion happens only when the goal and the object of devotion are one and the same.
- Devotion (affection) is not an action. It is an attitude. Devotion in action is worship. One shows devotion through various ways, like recitation and worship. A *karma yogi* is a devotee who expresses his devotion through work, and so is a *jnana yogi* who shows devotion by listening and meditating on the teachings of *Ishvara*.
- Lord Krishna says by performing all actions, taking refuge in Him, one attains the eternal and indestructible abode through His grace. He asks us to renounce all actions in Him through the intellect, have Him as the highest goal, resort to the *yoga* of the intellect, and always keep our consciousness fixed on Him. Then by His grace, we shall overcome all obstacles and difficulties.
- Lord Krishna says all individuals are fettered by their own nature. They cannot go away from their own nature.
- One can change one's nature slowly. Though one may intellectually know what is right to do, one's nature takes over and pushes one to act according to it.
- Lord Krishna says the Supreme Being dwells within the heart of all beings as consciousness. From there, He directs everyone through his *maya* like an instrument. He says we must fully surrender to that consciousness that is inside of all of us.

- Lord Krishna says that He has given Arjuna the greatest of all secrets. It is the secret of all secrets because even when revealed, only the perfected understands.
- Lord Krishna asks Arjuna to contemplate and evaluate what He has said and choose for himself what he must do.
- Lord Krishna says He will tell Arjuna the essence of the essence, for he is very dear to Him.
- He tells Arjuna to fix his mind on Him, be devoted to Him, worship Him, offer obeisance to Him and that certainly he will come to Him.
- Lord Krishna asks us to abandon all *dharmas* (actions) and surrender unto Him alone and He promises to liberate one from all sins.
- He concludes the Gita by telling not to grieve.

### **Part VII – The End**

- Lord Krishna says not to disclose this science to those devoid of austerities or devotion and not speak to those who do not desire to listen or to those who speak ill of Him.
- He says amongst His devotees, those who teach this supreme secret are His greatest devotees. He says they will certainly come to Him, without a doubt.
- Lord Krishna says even those who only listen to this knowledge with faith and without malice will be liberated of all sins and will attain the higher abodes where the virtuous dwell.
- Lord Krishna asks Arjuna if his delusion has been removed.
- Arjuna replies his delusion has been destroyed by the knowledge he gained through Lord Krishna's grace
- The Gita comes to an end with Sanjaya's description. He says,

*Wherever there is Lord Krishna, The Lord of **Yoga** and wherever there is the Supreme Archer Arjuna, in my opinion, there will certainly be unending prosperity, victory, welfare and righteousness.*



*Om Purnamadah Purnamidam,  
Purnat Purnamudachyate,  
Purnasya Purnamadaya,  
Purnamevavashishyate,  
Om Shantih Shantih Shantihi*

*Om! That is the infinite,  
This is the infinite,  
From the infinite, the infinite arises,  
Taking away the infinitude from the infinite, the infinite remains.  
Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!*



**Thank you**



I am very grateful to Swami Guruparananda, without whom this work wouldn't have been possible. Today we have access to such Supreme Knowledge only because of great gurus like him. These philosophies are extremely hard to comprehend. It is only because of these great gurus and their exceptional selfless effort that it has been passed down for generations and made available to us. I am very thankful to the guru, and I consider myself lucky to be able to embark on my own spiritual journey. I have listened to and re-listened to his lectures on Gita several times to understand these remarkable teachings. I have researched, questioned, made notes and later decided to express my notes, so it benefits many others like me who are in search of this knowledge. There are plenty of his teachings meticulously recorded on Upanishads, Vedic texts, Brahma Sutras, Bhagavad Gita, and more on his website and YouTube channel. Find more details in the link below:

<https://www.poornalayam.org/home/about-swamiji/>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/swamiguruparananda>



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